

SPY

April 1993 Volume 7 Number 6

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Departments

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 5

NAKED CITY

► Driving Miss Doherty.

Dissing Mrs. Danson (courtesy of Cher). Wacko Jacko. A SPY exclusive: new Lazlo letters. Camille Paglia on blood-sucking women and Greeks. In The Fine Print: The Pinteresque world of Charles and Camilla 20

BIG PICTURES 31

PARTY POOP 78

Features

GHOULS GO HOLLYWOOD

► Bullet in the head? \$300,000. Feet frozen off? \$650,000. MARY BILLARD records a month in TV's real-life-rights-buying feeding frenzy, from Amy Fisher to Katie Beers. Plus: a high-stakes SPY prank—bidding for Katie Beers's kidnapper, by LARRY DOYLE and LOUIS THEROUX 40

STUCK WITH THE CHECK

► For the past decade Brian McNally, charming groveler and trendy pal, has presided over New York's most strenuously hip restaurants—Odeon, 150 Wooster, 44—filling table after table with the town's most strenuously glamorous citizens, "friends" to whom he owes lots of money. DEIRDRE FANNING serves 50



TAKING THE U OUT OF USA: THE BALKANIZATION OF AMERICA

► Outlying provinces declaring independence from distant and unrepresentative central governments; boundaries being redrawn and rubbed out; backwater politicians suddenly the heads of nation-states...Only in America. DANIEL RADOSH and TIMOTHY LONG go in search of U.S. secessionists 56

WHAT'S BLACK & WHITE AND BLACK & WHITE AND BUYS A DILDO?

► To find out what it's *really* like to be a nun, we rented a costume and walked the streets. From the Met to the Pink Pussycat Boutique, ANN HODGMAN, bride of Christ, acts unnunishly 62

Columns

► RAWLIE THORPE wonders why Salomon Bros. is leaving talent out on **The Street**; in **The Industry**, CELIA BRADY examines the midlife crisis of Bob Redford; NINA BURLEIGH details high-tech backstabbing in **D.C.** 14

► T. W. IRWIN accepts no substitutes in **Review of Reviewers**; Live White Male ROY BLOUNT JR. urges the president to play middleman 68



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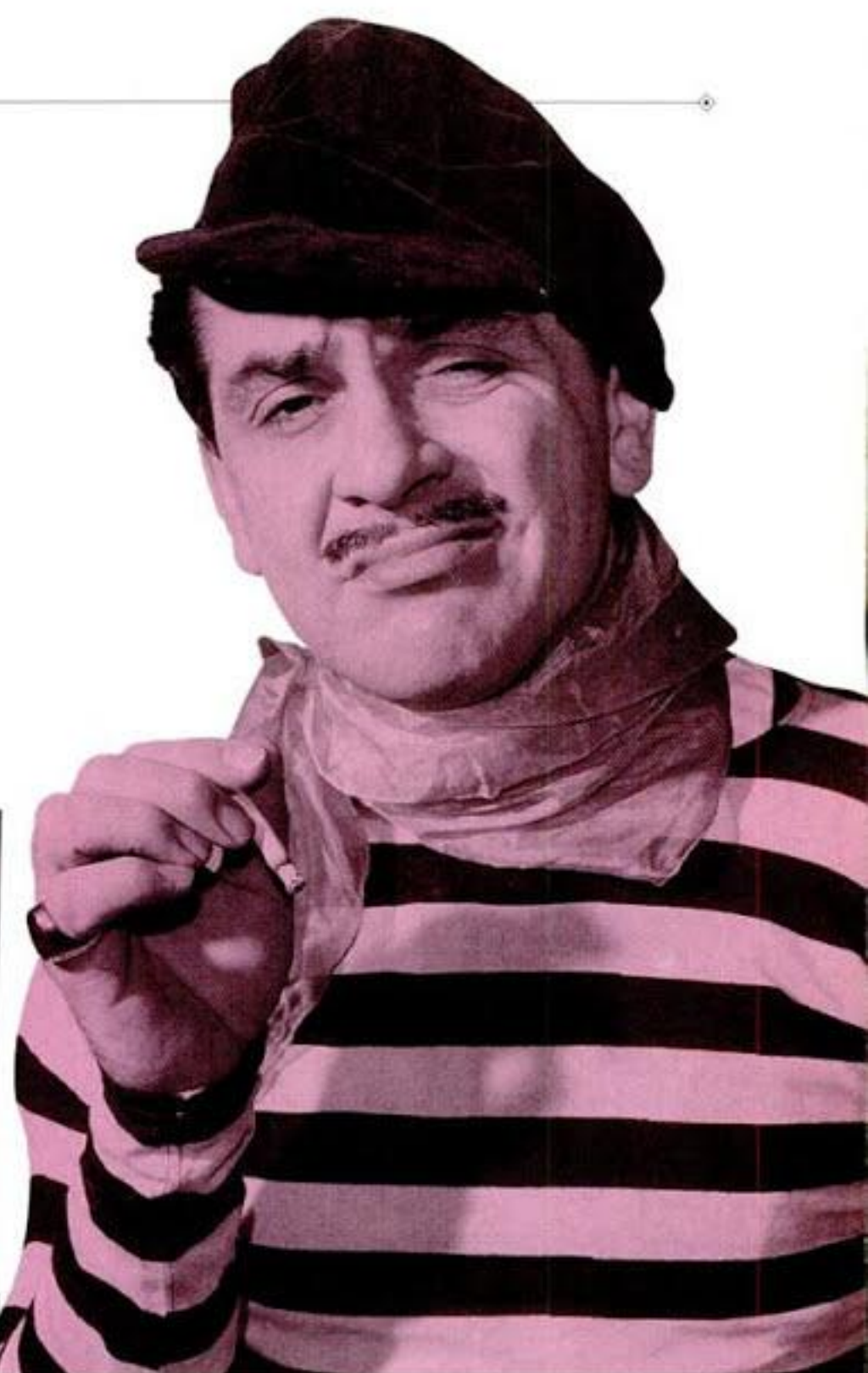
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—Ted Harbert, president of ABC
interviewing Michael Jackson

Great Expectations

April fish!



APRIL FISH! OR *UN POISSON D'AVRIL*, AS THEY SAY IN FRANCE, FOR REASONS THAT WE FIND, AS WE DO MOST THINGS FRENCH, MYSTERIOUS. PERHAPS ON THE FIRST OF EVERY APRIL THE STREETS OF

Paris are filled with the *thwack* of French people slapping one another silly with fish. Or perhaps they all stick fish

down their *jeans noirs*. Or perhaps that's the day they take the fish out. 🍷 *April fool!* We were simply demonstrating how Western ethnocentrism breeds hurtful negative stereotypes. *April fool II!* We really meant it. 🍷 *Something* smells fishy, and for the sake of argument, let's say it's not the French. Then *who*—why, yes, of course, it's the rotting corpse of the Bush administration. Beyond the odor of four torpid years, or the

stench of justice obstruction, we smell the peculiarly piscine scent of *unwarranted bonuses*. Seems the old administration had more on its mind than avoiding jail time in its final hours: Outgoing Cabinet officials managed to hand out \$300,000 in very last-minute bonuses. (Former Interior secretary Manuel Lujan proposed \$170,000 in bonuses for 12 of his employees *five minutes* before Bill Clinton took the oath of office. And to think we once accused him of idiocy.) “The president,” says George Stephanopoulos, who is not the president’s official press secretary but plays one on TV, “thinks it smells fishy, and he wants to get to the bottom of it.” Well, it’s only going to smell worse *there*. 🍷 Other late-breaking Poppy stinkiness: Just before midnight on January 19, national archivist Don Wilson gave Bush “exclusive legal control” of 5,000 computer tapes from the White House and National Security Council covering the time of the Iran-contra-Iraq odorama. The agreement includes “all presidential information, and all derivative information in whatever form,” or, as we like to call it, *evidence*.

But, hey, that’s history. The news is that archivist

Wilson has a great new job. Effective March 31, he's leaving government to run the George Bush Center at Texas A&M. For the record, Wilson says "the idea of a payoff is ridiculous." But Tom Blanton, executive director of the National Security Archive, sniffs, "This just doesn't pass the smell test."

Not passing the smell or taste test is the tongue of Bob Packwood, who, as we went to press, was improbably still a Republican senator from Oregon. *The Washington Post* reports that another gajillion women have come forward with accusations of sexual impropriety, including charges of "French-kissing them when a handshake would have been appropriate." It gets worse. Packwood "kissed me sensuously," one female associate reported. "His tongue was finding its way." Another said, "He laid a juicy kiss on my lips. I could feel the tongue coming." French *and* fishy.

Which brings to mind Bianca Jagger, who flew to Sarajevo not long ago because she wanted to "let the people...know we have not forgotten them." Forgotten *them*? Another person who apparently didn't die during the 1980s, Larry Flynt, is also engaged in fishy self-legitimacy. Flynt, founder of *Hustler*, has started a magazine called *Maternity Fashion & Beauty*. The title, amazingly, accurately reflects the contents, though followers of Flynt's career will note pregnant nudes on page 45 and a sex-during-pregnancy advice column that includes this question from a concerned reader: "My husband and I used to watch adult films together, but since becoming pregnant, I feel guilty—as though it's not proper. Why do I feel so ashamed?" Perhaps because *you're writing to a magazine published by the man responsible for Chester the Molester*. Or maybe it's hormones.

Hormones are powerful stuff. Just ask the male fish that are turning into female fish in the rivers of England. British scientists speculate that the feminized fish are the result of either detergents breaking down or estrogen excreted by women taking contraceptives. British hermaphrodite fish? Reminds us of *The Crying Game*, for reasons that, *gosh*, we can't say. (All right! *The chanteuse has a penis! Can we please not talk about something else now?*)

New York's sewage, meanwhile, is producing loaves, not female fish. "Your waste comes out here and fertilizes our wheat fields," one Colorado farmer told *The New York Times*. "That helps make some of the bread that finds its way back to your tables." Yet, sadly, the 1.7 billion gallons of sewage New Yorkers produce every day falls far short of demand. "As far as I'm concerned," gushes an Arizona farmer, "if everyone's sewage was like New York's, this world would be a better place."

On the opposite coast and end of the scent spectrum, San Francisco's mayor is trying to make the world a better, *less* smelly place. Frank Jordan sent out a memo recently asking city employees to attend meetings scent-free for the sake of those with "environmental illness or chemical sensitivity." Fragrance lobbyists have descended on the city, defending every American's right to smell fabulous.


In Washington, less overpowering but no less powerful lobbyists don't have to descend—they live there. And right now they're waiting to go off in the face of Hillary Rodham Clinton. Of the first lady's dabbling in actual issues, Sheila Tate, Nancy Reagan's former press secretary, warns, "The problem is

that if her [health care] task force is a stink bomb, Bill Clinton can't distance himself." Nor should he. "If it's not the issue of the century," says Josh Wiener of the Brookings Institution, "it is easily in the top four or five." Let's see: There's Hitler, nuclear proliferation, flag burning, and let's not forget the spread of Communism and, yes, health-care reform, the No. 5 issue of the century, just ahead of that whole brouhaha over Billy Joel's "Only the Good Die Young."

Wait, have we forgotten the lessons of Nannygate already? It seems like only a month ago that it was the most important issue facing the nation, one that prompted a Foreign Relations Committee staff member to fret, "Can you imagine how this is being regarded in the salons of Paris and London?"

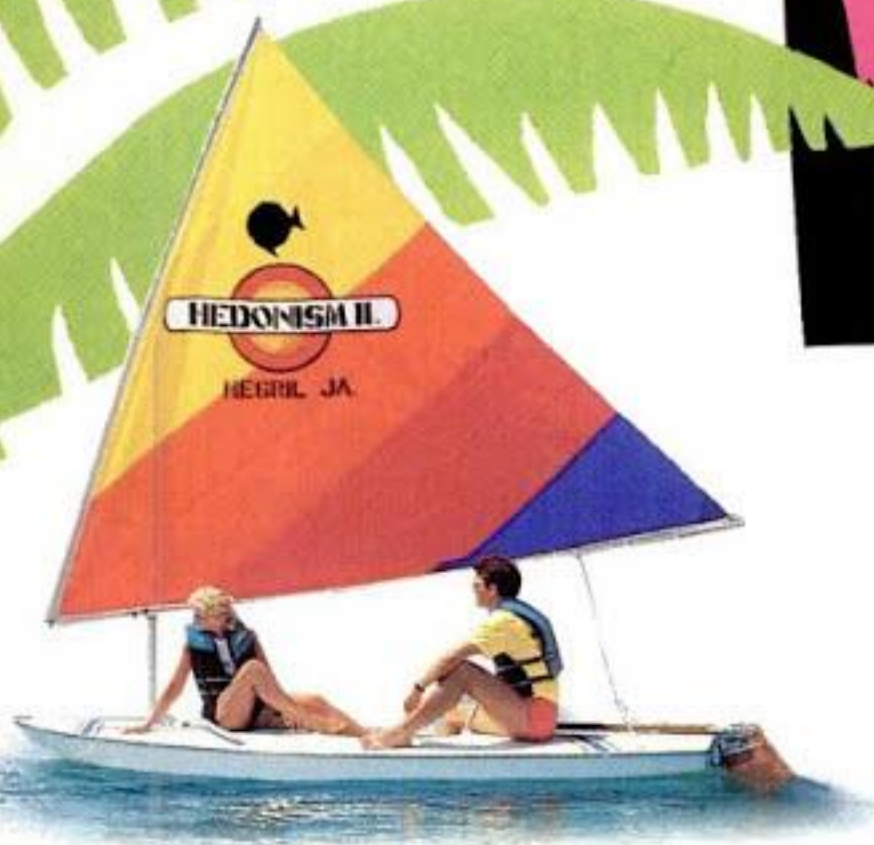
Well, in London they ought to be spending their time worrying about their educational system. Elvis Costello, explaining how he and the Brodsky Quartet went about writing their epistolary album, *The Juliet Letters*, told *Rolling Stone*, "Everyone went home and tried to write a suicide note one night—just like school." And over in Paris they've got enough trouble just keeping their trains running on time. Recently some French guy got his hand stuck in the toilet of a high-speed train, bringing the whole shebang to a halt. Firemen used metal cutters to remove the Frenchman with the toilet intact. Comedian-humanitarian-Francofetish Jerry Lewis, who was on the same train, called the rescue operation "inspiring."

Jerry Lewis? Smelly fish? Men noodling in toilets?

Voilà, as they say in France—Mickey Rourke! 

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From the SPY Mailroom



It's one of those days when everybody wants something. Dave Hicks of Austin wants what most SPY readers seem to want eventually: "Is your associate art director, Daniel Carter, the same one I graduated with from Kingwood High School in Texas? If so, can he get me a job at SPY? If memory serves, Dan and I didn't get along too well. However, I won't let it come between us." We're afraid there are no positions available right now, Dave, but we note with appreciation your twist on the usual application process, with which longtime readers of this column are well acquainted: By having somebody on staff who *already* hates you, you've saved yourself the trouble of having to write all those obnoxious letters to the editor before sending in your résumé.

An unsigned postcard from San Francisco: "As a closet misogynist, I wonder if Jamie Malanowsk is XY or XX." For starters, our national editor is Jamie Malanowski. Beyond that...well, you'll just have to see the movie yourself. (And don't tell your friends the ending!) We've also had requests for less personal information. Jennifer Clark, a correspondent from the Rome bureau of *Variety* (say, haven't we seen your stories about *XXIII*, the controversial Pope John biopic?), wonders, "Why is our SPY being mailed to us from Capodistria in Slovenia? Is SPY onto a hot new publishing trend that *Variety* should know about?" Sorry, Jennifer, but we can't discuss the details of these kinds of operations—national-security considerations.

One thing readers want that we can actually provide with a minimum of difficulty is copies of our magazine. C. Bertram Currier of Naples, Florida, wants "five copies ►

Letters to SPY

Hilarious

I was positively aghast at the cover on your February issue. How could you possibly condone such a thing?

Mrs. Clinton, as our new first lady, certainly deserves more respect than this. Even as a spoof or a bit of humor, it is not the least bit funny and in the absolutely worst possible taste. It is my personal feeling that people who stoop to this level of degradation should not even have the privilege of living in this country. Perhaps it is time for you to reassess your values!

Luella Berry
Scotts Valley, California

I am repelled and disgusted. Your decision to portray Hillary Clinton as a dominatrix demonstrates your inability to accept the idea that a competent, capable, intelligent, hardworking, accomplished woman with impressive credentials as a person, a lawyer and an activist for social change can be elevated to the level of major policy responsibility. Instead you characterize her as only a sexual persona (an offensive, inappropriate stereotype) whose only agenda is to wield power against males.

Dr. Lynne Friedman
Long Island City, New York
Actually, what we really always wanted on the cover was a picture of Denis Thatcher in leather.

The February cover has to be one of the most hilarious examples of your magazine's great sense of humor. No other magazine would have done such a thing. Keep those outrageous pictures coming—they alone got me to become a new subscriber.

David Miller
Centerville, Ohio

The financial district is abuzz with the rumor that the babelicious torso appended to Hillary Clinton's head actually belongs to Ross Perot's daughter—a putative fact that legal and prudential considerations obviously prevented you from disclosing directly, but that is perhaps obliquely acknowledged in the sly forecast of one of President Bush's retirement activities on page 50 in February. Would you confirm or deny the rumor? The stability of our nation's financial markets may depend on your prompt reply (and the outcome of several substantial wagers in our office most certainly do).

Mark Howson
New York

Just one hint: Why do you think the Bundesbank lowered interest rates in February?

I didn't think you'd ever surpass your cover image of Kissinger and Merv Griffin dancing at Bohemian Grove [November 1989], but you've outdone yourselves. Superb.

Martin Lewison
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Scat Singer

Loved your February cover of Hillary! And your sick Chuck Berry story ["Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll—Especially Sex," by Mike Sager]! I'm not a regular reader, but your cover was a must-have. Keep up the exceptional work!

Rod Grimaldi
Portage, Wisconsin

I take exception and offense to Mike Sager's broadside of Chuck Berry. Although rock 'n' roll by nature caters to the prurient interests of teenagers, I never thought that was the aim of

SPY. Your peeping into Chuck's bathroom is as inappropriate as a critique of his music in the *Saturday Review*. I can find no justification for publishing it. I don't know how anyone expects Chuck Berry to come out of three prison terms a more sensitive, caring and compassionate lover.

Murray Silver Jr.

*Author, Great Balls of Fire:
The Uncensored Story of
Jerry Lee Lewis
Atlanta, Georgia*

So you didn't mention Lewis's marriage to his 13-year-old cousin in your book?

No one listens to Chuck Berry's music anymore. I'm sure 10 percent of the population doesn't know who Chuck Berry is and the rest don't give a flying fuck. Really, SPY, your loyal readers expect better of you!

*Alexander Vincent Areno
Los Angeles, California*

I had just finished reading your article about Chuck Berry when I turned on the television and, lo and behold,

there's Chuck playing away for the president-elect at the Inaugural gala! Thank you for publishing the best magazine in the marketplace.

Dan Clarke

Rochester, New Hampshire

God Save Condé Nast

Your entertaining account of the British invasion in the February issue ["The New British Invasion," by Jamie Malanowski] does too little justice to a peculiar pattern I have observed. The spread of British journalists and British journalism seems to be exactly in those areas in which British experience should represent a disqualification. You note that a Brit has been made film critic for *The New Yorker*, thus permitting British criticism to flourish where the product itself cannot. I wonder if burned-out lefty Christopher Hitchens is really qualified to analyze the Clinton administration, given that any one of his past political prescriptions, if adopted by the

of your November 1992 issue. I may buy ten more copies." Why that issue? "It is the one that contains the article about my brother-in-law Jerry Weintraub and sister Jane." Let's see, that would be "First Cheeseball," by Suzanna Andrews, in which the title character, Currier's movie-producer brother-in-law, is described as George Bush's "most embarrassing friend" and his wife, the former Jane Morgan (and before that, Florence Currier), as the object of a youthful Bush's smirky fantasies. We would say Currier is right to stop at five copies for now, and then see if he wants the additional copies. (But if he *does* spring for the full 15, we'll send him *absolutely free* a copy of our August 1992 issue, in which George Bush's smarmy remarks about Currier's sister ["He Cheats On His Wife," by Joe Conason] are described in greater detail.)

Congratulations to ourselves are in order because our TV show *The SPY Magazine Hit List* (December 2, NBC) is eligible for an American ▶



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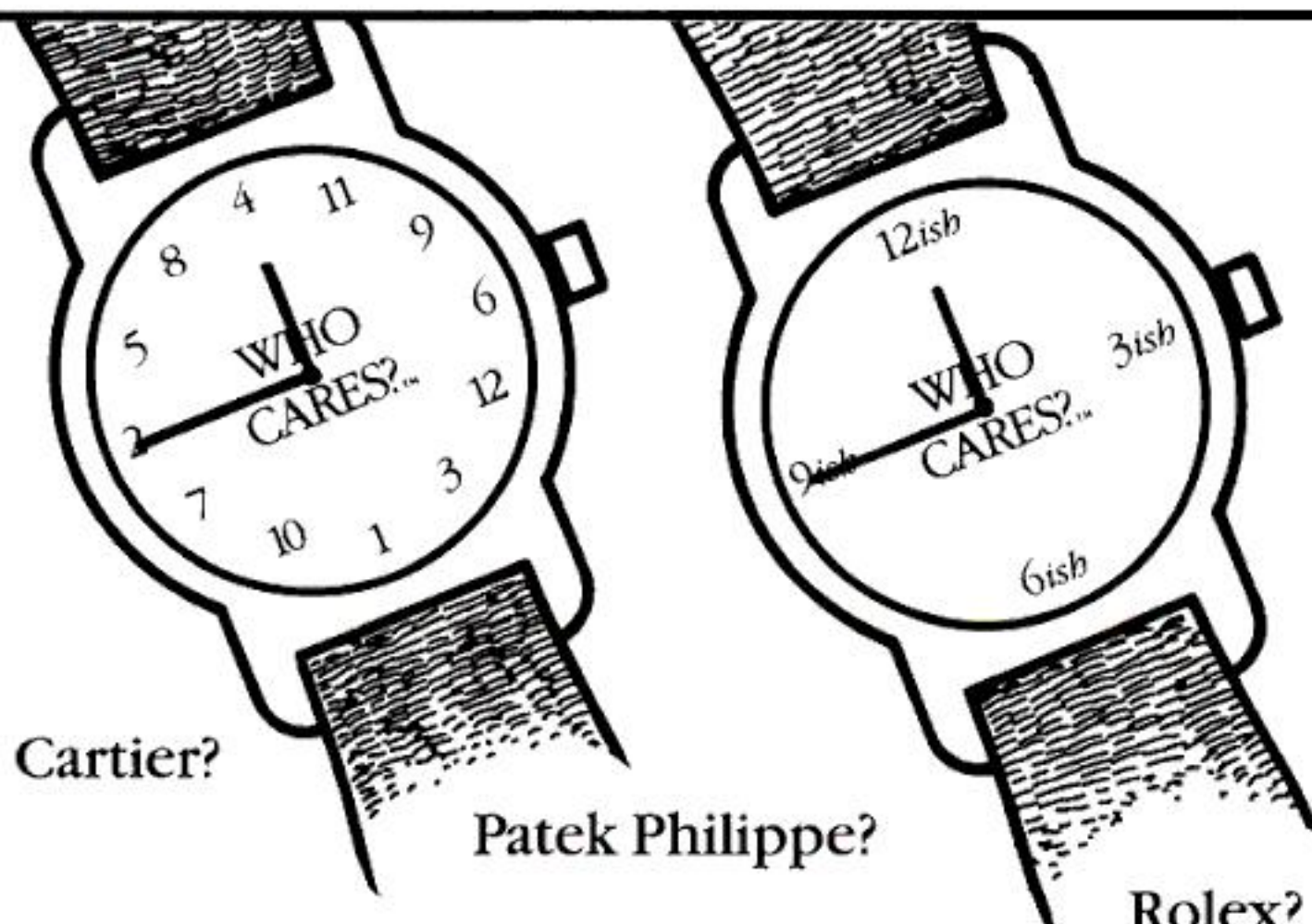
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Democrats, would have condemned them to another decade in the wilderness? I myself have observed that increasing numbers of businesspeople and academics subscribe to *The Economist*, despite the fact that the British are in no position to give anyone (save perhaps the government of Argentina) advice on economic matters. Are we headed toward a kind of journalism in which the Italians are war correspondents and the Russians specialists in agriculture?

*Roland Stephen
Thousand Oaks, California*

This just in over the wire: The Koreans are monopolizing dry cleaning; Arabs, convenience stores; the Jews, entertainment; the Greeks, restaurants; the Irish, the political establishment; and now the British are in publishing! The last of these is massively disturbing to a publication staffed entirely by smug little dinks who thought that the shelter for the socially retarded that somehow passes for an elite eastern college they all attended had cornered the market on pretentiousness and class-centered exclusion.

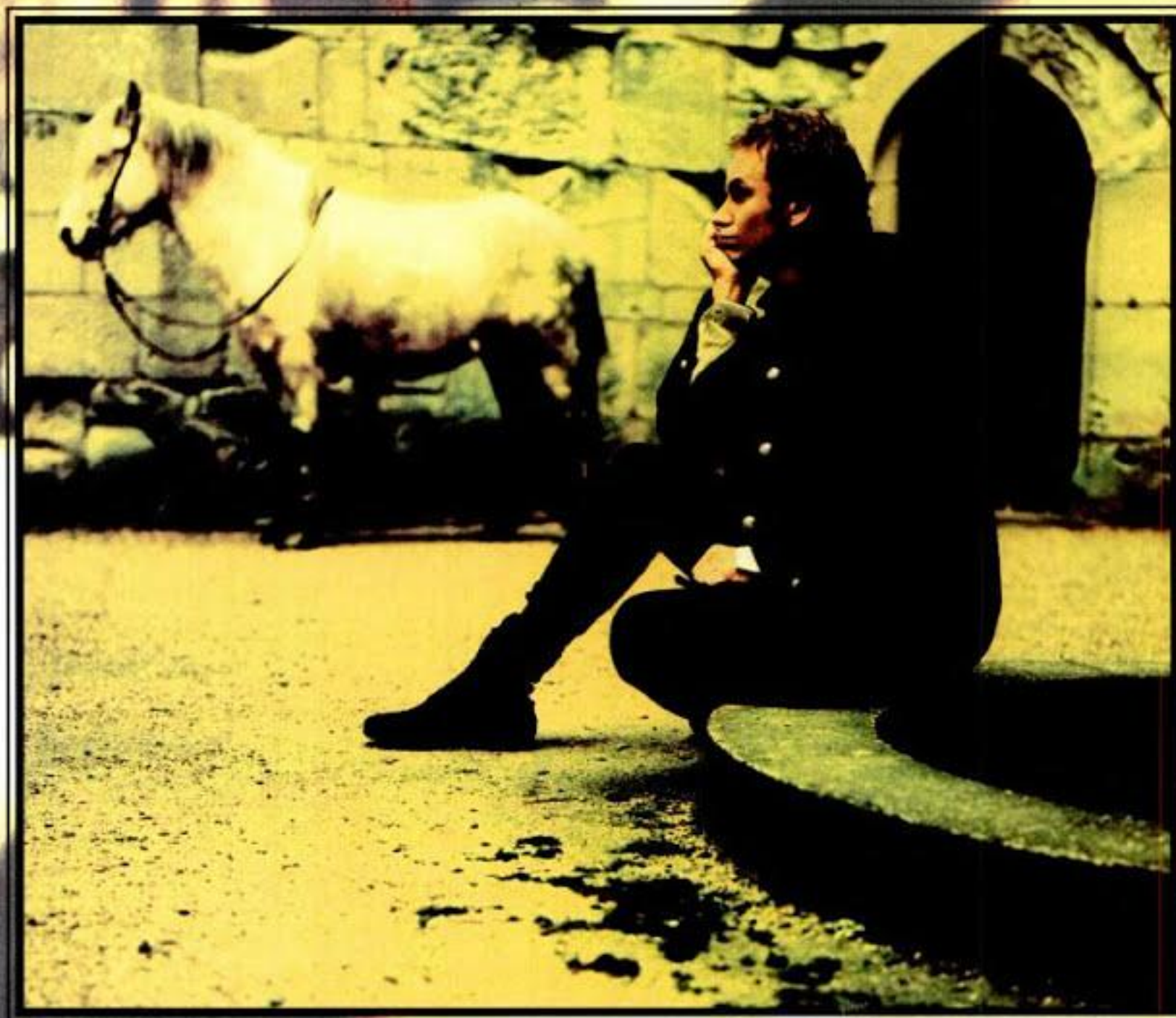
It must be equally frustrating to witness foreigners taking over American companies, when we know it is the sole and protected domain of Harvard grads to run corporations into the ground. I think the Ivy League schools are in competition with Oxford and Cambridge to see who can bankrupt their respective nations first. Face it, kids, you are outclassed. I do admit, though, it was very amusing to see SPY trying to sound populist.

*Mark K. McCarthy
Chicago, Illinois*

Don't feel so bitter, Mr. McCarthy; we have often heard that people rejected by Harvard can lead useful, basically happy lives.

Thank you for your piece on the recent infestation of lobster-backed bastards in our country. The current crop of supercilious English buggers

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Television Award in the Variety Specials category. Our competition includes shows like *Sea World Summer Safari* (CBS) and *1992 Crosby Clambake* (TNN). We're honored even to be nominated.

Bob Cashill of San Jose wants a card for his grandfather's 80th birthday, and he wants it from the president. His problem, however, is that when he submitted his request to the White House Greetings Office—who knew?—the president was George Bush. Bob has forwarded to us the White House's terse response: "The date of the occasion for which you requested a greeting occurs after President Bush has left office. We suggest you resubmit your request to the new Administration after January 20, 1993." We hate to disappoint you again, Bob, but *spy* can't help, either. While we ran well in Florida and the plains states, we actually won no electoral votes.

Speaking of the new administration, L. M. Harris of Herndon, Virginia, writes, "I hope Mrs. Clinton successfully sues your magazine." As it happens, we have reason to suspect that the first lady herself enjoyed our cover image, which would prove that not all feminists in the Washington, D.C.—Herndon, Virginia, corridor lack a sense of humor.

Speaking of disgraceful exploitations of the first couple, an international eyewear manufacturer called Sàfilo Group has sent us a press release about its Clinton Eyeglass Frame. They were decent enough to concede that the frame is actually named after the town of Clinton, New Jersey, as "part of a frame collection coined after various cities across the United States" but shameless enough to say, "The Clinton is a politically correct unisex style [that] takes a middle-of-the-road stance between the ultraconservative vintage styling of yesterday and the ultratrendy, unusual designer eye fashions of today." Sàfilo— isn't that Esperanto for Democratic Leadership Conference?

Last but—well, last, we were intrigued when Christopher Lydon,

should be immediately deported back to the land of the Excruciatingly Boring Sunday, after being forced to buy American-made products with the loot they've acquired from their indulgent American employers. Their former employers should then be deported back to Texas (for life) for the encouragement of the others. Keep up the good work.

*Alexander Stuart Gray
Memphis, Tennessee*

Other Voices, Other Letters

As the father of a beautiful five-month-old daughter who is the size of a large rib roast, I found "May I Suggest Our Zinfandel, Mr. Dahmer?" [by Gary Wolf, February] particularly distasteful.

*W. Wilson Dinielli
Seymour, Connecticut*

Your ranking of Ross Perot as the worst thing to happen in the U.S. in 1992 [The SPY 100, January] overlooks some very important facts: (1) His focus on our national debt and deficit made Americans acutely aware of the depth of the problem. I am sure that those in the media such as SPY have failed to inform the public, otherwise the public would have been alerted and we would not be \$4 trillion in debt. (2) He was the only presidential candidate to forcefully address the influence of foreign lobbyists. (3) He alone forcefully opposed the Mexican free-trade agreement. If it's such a great idea, why is Japan (whose borders are closed to American products) rich and the U.S. \$4 trillion in debt?? (4) He alone highlighted the bank failures. (5) He alone opposed the Gulf War before it began. (6) Our airline industry is being sold to foreign countries. I can see this doesn't bother you. You don't mind if foreign countries own so much of our assets that we the people loose [*sic*] control of our destiny and our democracy. (7) You call Perot paranoid but fail to give a full accounting of the political climate as we now know it to be. We now know

the deeply respected talk show interviewer for WGBH in Boston, sent us a document that concerned the deeply loathed Mort Zuckerman. The document in question was a page from *Platinum Card By Invitation Only*, a glossy American Express newsletter. For an astonishing \$125 per person, we learned, American Express's most status-obsessed marks could sign up for "An Evening With Mort Zuckerman," which included a cocktails-and-hors-d'oeuvres reception, a talk during which Zuckerman would "share his perceptions and philosophy about operating a business in turbulent economic times," and a question-and-answer session.

Zzzzz. 📖

CORRECTION

In March's "SPY Guide to Show Business Networking" we identified Judy Hofflund as an agent at United Talent Agency; she is, but she is also a partner in the firm. 📖

that Elizabeth Tamposi at the State Department was looking into Perot's and Clinton's passport files. According to SPY there is no need for ol' Ross to worry about someone wanting to tap his phones, is there? (8) During the election the Bush administration started a trumped-up investigation of FBI director William Sessions because he was simultaneously investigating the Bush administration's and Justice Department's involvement in Iraqgate. George Bush is the real inspector. The media consistently ignores the fact that Ronald Reagan signed an executive order allowing the CIA to spy on Americans. Are you at SPY ignorant or propagandists? SPY magazine is the worst event of 1992.

Name withheld

Indianapolis, Indiana

You raise a number of interesting points, many of which we did not have space to print. We don't know how we ever got the idea that Perot and his supporters were kooks. Sorry.

Just a note to tell you how good I think SPY is. I have been exasperated beyond belief at the national media since the Persian Gulf War. I was also flabbergasted that "family values," "Murphy Brown" and Gennifer Flowers were considered issues in the last election, and not the S&L scandal, Iran-contra, Iraqgate, etc. When you reported on Jennifer Fitzgerald and company and published "1,000 Reasons Not to Vote for George Bush" [July/August 1992], I cheered out loud. It was a marked contrast to the chickenshit reporting elsewhere. The 1990s are a sorry time for what passes for American culture and the Fourth Estate, with the notable exception of SPY.

Scott Loughrey

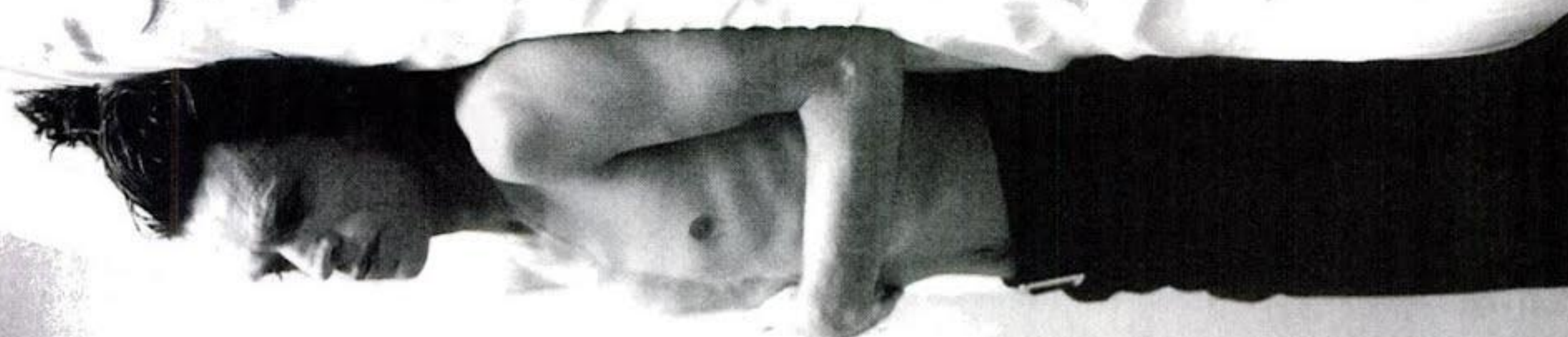
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THERE ARE STILL SIDES NOBODY KNOWS



J A G G E R

Where the Deer and the Antelope Have Cellular Phones

"What do we do now?" asks Robert Redford at the end of *The Candidate* when his idealistic character, after having compromised himself, unexpectedly gets elected to the Senate. Eight years after founding the Sundance Institute, and having turned the Sundance Film Festival into *the* out-of-town event of the year, Redford is considering his victory and asking the same question of friends and close associates. Sundance was created for a noble purpose, one which it still largely serves: to celebrate and nourish independent filmmakers. But at the heart of this mission, or so Redford has always believed, is making Hollywood take notice. Now that Hollywood has, Redford has begun to appreciate the paradox of his success. Ordinary Bob, as friends call the star behind his back, privately expresses bemusement and disappointment that the pilgrims from Hollywood to Park City, Utah, insist on bringing Hollywood with them, twisting Sundance's low-key seriousness and idealism into frenzied hotness-seeking and deal-making.

The ten-day festival's changing character was more obvious than ever last January. Among the visitors were Steven Spielberg and Disney's Jeffrey "Sparky" Katzenberg, as well as practically every agent in town, and the whole thing was co-sponsored by Time Warner's *Entertainment Weekly*. The festival may not have completely abandoned its political priorities (competent and relatively well financed white male filmmaker Rob Weiss's decent *Amongst Friends* was passed over for an award in favor of the frankly lousy *Just Another Girl on the IRT*, directed by Leslie Harris, a black woman), but culturally, Hollywood has taken hold. Each evening, agents and executives dine in only two restaurants, The Barking Frog Grill or the River Horse Café, thus importing Hollywood's maniacal pack attitude and hair-trigger faddishness to Utah restauranting. Sundance's earnest founder seems mildly dis-

turbed by all this, but he apparently can't help finding it a little thrilling. Traditionally, Redford keeps a low profile. One well-known journalist who has gone to Sundance four times never once saw Redford until this year, when he showed up at a tribute to Denzel Washington and a screening—not of *Just Another Girl* or even *Amongst Friends* but of *Silent Tongue*, the soggy, pretentious, French-financed movie written and directed by the insufferable Sam Shepard and attended conspicuously by Shepard and Jessica Lange.

A certain amount of contradictory altruism and glamour-seeking seems innate to Redford. Recently he angered many of his Utah neighbors by fighting, for environmental reasons, against the proposed expansion of the two-lane Provo Canyon Road. But now he's helping to increase the traffic flow over the same road with plans

to transform Sundance into a big-time "destination resort." Thanks to Redford, the Utah wilderness will get an infusion of 107 new hotel rooms in the next two years and 150 new houses within three years. When sharpies from the Valley do this sort of thing, it's called development—and they aren't referring to a script.

Redford isn't the only person whose success has sunk him into midlife angst. Following Mike Ovitz's decision that there is more to life than just being a talent agent (frankly, selling movie stars seems preferable to selling soda pop, but Ovitz's dad was a liquor salesman), biggest-time lawyer Peter Dekom has been thinking that what he really wants to do is, well...*something* creative.

Dekom, a partner in Bloom Dekom Hergott & Cook, the most powerful firm in the business, has lately left some of his clients unhappy about his apparent diminished interest in lawyering. Because he once studied film-

making, Dekom has harbored a nagging regret over not being an auteur himself, or at the very least a studio executive. Recently he has been bringing this up a lot, talking to people about teaming up to form a little studio or production company.



**Pilgrims from Hollywood have twisted
Redford's Sundance Film Festival
into frenzied hotness-seeking**

It's probably just talk—Dekom lacks the guts to give up his comfortable position to take such a risk—but some people don't want to hear it at all. When Dekom's pal Joe Roth needed a lawyer to negotiate the deal that eventually landed him at Disney, he passed over Dekom in favor of Barry Hirsch, partly because he was afraid that Dekom would want to go into business with him.

(Another reason people don't like to do business with Dekom is his truly embarrassing inability to stop himself from making those awful puns all the time, even during sober business meetings. Friends have apparently talked to him about it, but so far nothing seems to help.)

One thing that may very well make an executive's life look tempting to Dekom right now is the increasing difficulty of being a Hollywood superlawyer. He has recently found himself in a completely untenable show biz nexus of potential conflicts of interests, pretty stan-

dard business but nevertheless tiresome. In the recent financial to-and-fro over Ron Howard and Brian Grazer's Imagine Films Entertainment, Dekom had to deal with the following conditions: (1) he is a former partner of Tom Pollock's, the head of Universal, which now distributes and finances Imagine's films; (2) he represented Grazer and Howard, Imagine's principals, and advised them when they left Imagine last fall, when they got a lucrative six-year production deal at Universal and when they negotiated to buy back Imagine's public stock; and (3) at the time of the Howard-Grazer negotiations, he was an Imagine board member and stockholder and was reported to have tried to raise money to make a competing bid for the company. Dekom told one friend that the SEC warned him he was skating on very thin ice and should quit speaking publicly about his interest in the company.

Ovitz, Redford, Dekom...No one is happy with who they are, and yet nobody, it seems, thinks he would be happier with Tom Pollock's job. The latest to turn down the chance to become Universal's daimyo are said to be Barry Levinson's smart, good-guy producing partner, Mark Johnson, and the extremely goofy Grazer. Has anyone called Peter?

Trims and Ends: Who would have thought that Joel Silver and Sylvester Stallone might make a good, even thoughtful movie? It's still in production, but the script for Warner Bros.' *Demolition Man*, a *Blade Runner*-ish film also starring Wesley Snipes, is great. And since Silver is boasting that he got Stallone for only \$5 million up front (and gee, after *Cliffhanger* one would think Stallone could write his own ticket), the picture might actually make money. See you Monday night at Mortons; I'll be the one nursing a Tab. —Celia Brady

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Can't Anybody Here Play Liar's Poker?

Probably the greatest wasted Wall Street talent at the moment is John Meriwether, the former vice chairman of Salomon Brothers and legendary bond trader who resigned from the firm in 1991 as a result of its Treasury-bill scandal. As you will recall, the scandal was caused by Paul Mozer, the swaggering little head of Salomon's Treasury desk, who tried to corner the market in a couple of bond issues. Mozer's efforts resulted in an investigation by the SEC and the Treasury and Justice departments. He was fired in August 1991, and last January he was indicted for several felonies, including securities fraud.

Salomon chief John Gutfreund, president Tommy Strauss and Meriwether resigned when Mozer was dismissed, after acknowledging that they had known about one of Mozer's illegal bids for nearly four months before bothering to inform the government. They were replaced by the Untouchables—investor Warren Buffett and his chosen chairman, a very clubbable Briton named Deryck Maughan.

In December, without admitting any wrongdoing, Gutfreund, Strauss and Meriwether agreed to pay relatively minor fines levied by the SEC, which blamed them for supervising Mozer too loosely. The SEC was least harsh with Meriwether, though, since he'd brought the Mozer problem to the attention of his superiors as soon as he learned of it; Meriwether's fine was \$50,000, a pittance to a bond trader.

Now that Meriwether has paid his debt to society, all of Wall Street is wondering why this career Salomon man isn't back buying and selling in his chair on the firm's football-field-size trading floor. Not that he needs to work; it's just that a man of his trading talents should be doing more than playing in the AT&T Pebble Beach pro-am.

What most of Wall Street doesn't know is that after Meriwether's case was disposed of, Salomon conducted intense negotiations with him to try

to get him to return to the firm. The approach was extremely discreet, but according to a source close to Meriwether, Salomon was very much the pursuer. The talks stalled, however, when the firm "wouldn't meet his terms."

Make that one term: Meriwether's future at Salomon. In his mid-forties, he has plenty of years of work ahead of him, and he wanted some assurances. "He'd have had to be in direct line for the chairmanship of the firm," the source says, as he was when Gutfreund was running things. When that promise wasn't forthcoming, Meriwether said forget it.

Could it be that Deryck Maughan doesn't understand how much it would behoove Salomon to have Meriwether back on the desk? Unlikely. Meriwether fans—including Larry Hilibrand, who famously made a reported \$23 million in

1990 in salary and bonus, and Eric Rosenfeld, another "quant"-oriented trader—remained at the firm and were undoubtedly vocal in their praise of him. Perhaps not coincidentally, at about the time the Meriwether talks broke down, Rosenfeld announced his resignation.

A more likely explanation is that Maughan, who commanded the early months of the Salomon cleanup from his \$1,000-a-day suite at Manhattan's swank Mark Hotel, may be reluctant to let a powerhouse like Meriwether get near him. And, although Meriwether is exceedingly shy and low-key—he'd be the guy listening to the joke, not

telling it—his return might smack of the old, swashbuckling Salomon. The image of the corsair might have appealed to Gutfreund, but it's one that Maughan is desperately trying to shake.

But bringing back Meriwether would have also meant bringing back big trading gains and a proven talent scout. Every year, Meriwether single-handedly made hundreds of millions in profits

for Salomon on his bold trading schemes. What's more, he excelled at turning up brilliant bond traders in odd places. Meriwether, for instance, was one of the first Wall Streeters to realize that mathematical geniuses like Hilibrand studying



Salomon conducted intense negotiations with John

Meriwether to get him to return

probabilities in university labs could make billions devising arcane trading strategies.

Not flashy or brash, Meriwether was a steady midwesterner in a business populated by either stuffy Ivy Leaguers or scrappy loudmouths. All through the 1980s, when he was making millions a year, he lived in the same one-bedroom apartment on the Upper East Side. "He has great confidence," says a trader, "but he's a nice guy." Decidedly not like Mozer, a self-important creep who cheats at golf.

Nowhere was Meriwether's confidence more evident than in his gambling. Traders recall how on a slow trading day he would bet big on whatever sporting event might be going on. If it were summertime, he'd bet on a totally meaningless, midweek baseball game. "Let's say it was a Cubs game," recalls a former colleague. "Meriwether would call up the weather report in Chicago to see which way the wind was blowing. If it was blowing to the south at 12 miles an hour, he'd know whether that would help or hurt the team in town to play the Cubs."

Meriwether is the man in Michael Lewis's book *Liar's Poker* who, when Gutfreund challenges him to a \$1 million game of liar's poker, agrees to play only if the stakes are upped to \$10 million. Indeed, thanks to Meriwether, liar's poker became part of the cult at Salomon. Once a month, he would have his computers spit out sheets of random, eight-figure numbers—like those found on a dollar bill—50 or so to a page. He and a handful of his highly numerate colleagues would each take a sheet and go up to the corporate dining room to eat steaks, drink beers and play liar's poker until the wee hours.

Cutting Meriwether loose speaks volumes about the new crew at Salomon—bureaucrats worried more about image or control than about bringing back a courageous money-maker.

—Rawlie Thorpe



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Cyberwonks

A 40-ish Democratic political consultant wandered through the Old Executive Office Building recently and noticed something odd. He was the oldest person there. "I felt like Moses," he says.

What he didn't realize was that these bright-eyed wunderkinder are true avatars of Clintonism. They're a perfect synthesis of the old and the new, equal measures of traditional politicking and high-tech wonkiness. They know what tens of thousands of other Clinton-administration job seekers did not: that grabbing a lower-echelon plum in the Clinton administration required not only knowing a Friend of Bill but also knowing how to delete the computer files of someone who knows a better FOB.

For many dewy young campaign workers, November heralded the dawn of a new era. Cynicism, divisiveness and fur were relics. Earnest conviction and a smoke-free White House were just around the corner.

Among those who worked on Clinton's campaign, there was also a sense of joyous...*personal* expectation. The country was going to change, and even better, they were going to be paid to help change it. And so they worked happily for no pay on the Inaugural committee or at the transition offices, hoping for the big reward that would call for blue blazers and a haircut.

Utterly blinded by their candidate's outside-the-Beltway rhetoric, these campaign workers were awakened with a jolt when they arrived at Transition, as the headquarters on Vermont Avenue was known. That's when they first met their vulpine counterparts, the horde of hungry professional Democrats who'd been waiting inside Washington during what their bard, Sidney Blumenthal, called, in a recent article for *The New Yorker*, "the wilderness years."

As of Election Day, the new administration had a total of 4,318

noncareer political appointments to make—and more than 1,000 résumés coming in a day.

In keeping with its technocratic campaign veneer, the new administration employed artificial intelligence to sort out the situation. The Resumix machine from Santa Clara, California, is a chip-head's dream of New Age management style, and surely the cleanest way to dole out patronage.

The Resumix was supposed to be unschmoosable. It could scan résumés, file them under code words and give a limited number of "professional search consultants" (some of whom were being paid \$750 a day) a way to match the qualified with the jobs.

Right from the start, the unpaid grunts in the office noticed that everything at Transition wasn't sweet and egalitarian. Indeed, the office it-

self, staffed largely from within Washington, resembled a Macbeth-style caldron of dark magic and short knives. The people who worked in the office wanted jobs, too.

"I'm pretty Machiavellian," says one person who worked at Transition, and who has since gotten a job. "But this went beyond my wildest dreams. It made the New York publishing world look like kindergarten." People in the transition office were so desperate for jobs themselves, according to this source, that

they weren't beyond engaging in computer sabotage, entering one

another's computers to change or kill files of potential competitors. "They would circulate false memos about jobs," the source says. "They might even answer the telephone and if the call was from Little Rock, they'd say you weren't there—even if you were in the bathroom—or even say, 'He's already got a job. Can I help you?'"

Things were probably worse, though, if you were in Little Rock or any-

where else outside the District. After the election, Clinton transition officials asked everyone who had worked on the campaign and who wanted a job in Washington to fill out a form. But when the forms were supposed to have arrived in



"I'm pretty Machiavellian, but this made the New York publishing world look like kindergarten"

Washington, curiously, they had all been lost.

Sometime during the transition, administration officials assembled a list of 800-pound gorillas who became coded "sponsors." The list, obtained by SPY, contains the names of 895 prominent people and groups—presumably the bulk of the FOB network. Each name is accompanied by three letters: REP and SEN for members of Congress, TRN for transition, POL for policy wonks (Blumenthal, *The New Yorker's* man in Washington, is one of these; his former boss, *The New Republic's* Marty Peretz, is just an OTH, or other), CGR for constituent group (e.g., Asian Pacific Americans for Clinton/Gore). Hillary is coded as an OFL (Office of First Lady), and Tipper is an OVS (Office of the Vice Spouse?). Critics who complain Clinton's Cabinet looks less like America and more like the American Bar Association will not be surprised to find the ABA on the list, as well as a separate entry for "other bar associations."

There are some interesting omissions. Every living former Democratic presidential nominee is on the list, except for one particularly swarthy, diminutive, pathetic one. All of Clinton's opponents last spring are on the list, except for one particularly ascetic, turtlenecked, annoying one. Jesse Jackson, of course, is not on the list.

Transition grunts were instructed to feed the résumés into the machine with appropriately mysterious codes. Résumés with sponsors went into the machine coded as A-SPONS, according to a source who worked in the Resumix office. "Résumés without sponsors got a letter B, and although they got scanned into the system, they were never looked at again," the source says. "People were getting totally frozen out. Washington insiders were getting jobs, and even people at Transition were getting fucked over. The irony of it was, the best place to be wasn't out in the field work-

ing for Clinton. It was in the D.C. or Little Rock offices, where you could code your résumé."

Coding wasn't limited to sponsorship. The forms people were asked to fill out contained an optional section on ethnicity. But even that wasn't sufficient. Résumés of applicants with a particular ethnic or interest group were accompanied by a code name, the name of a sponsor who represented such a group. Thus, the word ROQUE (after transition official Margarita Roque) was scrawled on those résumés presumed to have come from Hispanics, even if the person had no connection to Roque. And [David] MIXNER or [Bob] HATTOY was written on résumés presumed to have come from gays. And so on.

The importance of multiculturalism wasn't missed. Tom Hoog, an executive with the PR firm Hill and Knowlton, led every one of his sponsoring letters with a variation on *In keeping with your pledge to have an administration that "looks more like America," I can think of no one more qualified than...*

On average, sponsors sent over about a dozen job seekers each. But some sponsors took their clout more seriously. According to a source in the transition office, one of the most lavish sponsors was Louisiana senator John Breaux, who sponsored about 1,100 job seekers.

Official sponsor Sidney Blumenthal did his part by writing a fawning *New Yorker* piece about the "many aspirants" with "unquestioned merit" and "impressive references," without once mentioning that he himself was one of those "impressive references." Blumenthal's sponsor code ended up on the résumé of at least one worthy job seeker: his own wife, Jackie.

Blumenthal denies sponsoring his wife, though, and says he didn't even know such a list existed. And lest Blumenthal be accused of being in too tight with the administration, it should be noted that his wife didn't get the job. —Nina Burleigh

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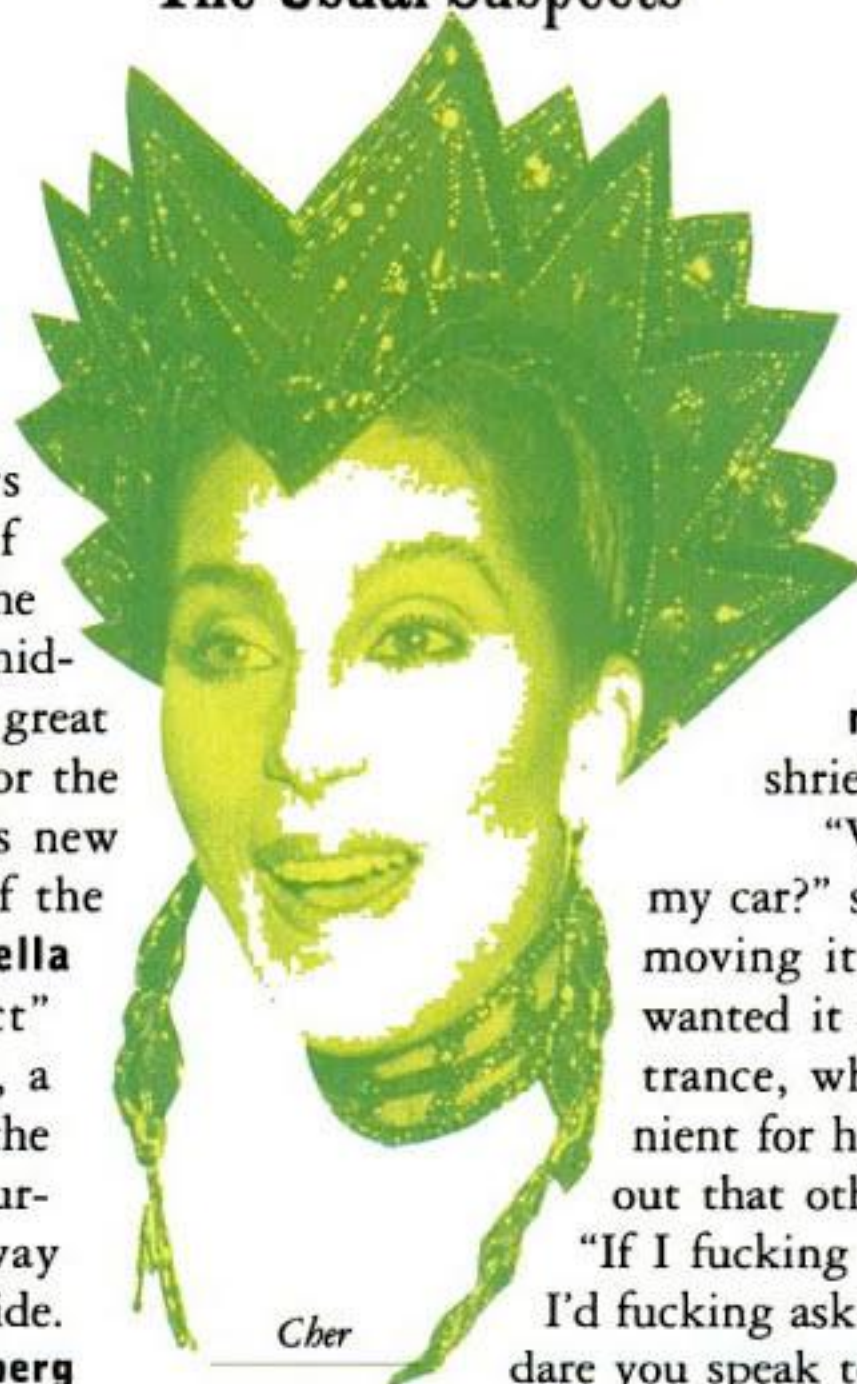
The Usual Suspects

1

It started, as most 1993 anecdotes involving famous actors seem to, with that freshest of salutations, "Hey, girlfriend!" The setting was the basement of a midtown office building remade at great expense into a Casbah setting for the introduction of **Giorgio Armani's** new fragrance, *Giò*. While much of the crowd debated whether **Isabella Rossellini** and **Jim "I Can't Act" Belushi** were actually a *couple*, a minicommotion broke out over the lighted runway. It was freakish survivor **Cher**, crossing the runway against traffic to reach the other side. Freakish survivor **Whoopi Goldberg** called out, "Hey, girlfriend," to her leather-clad chum, and together they provided a running voice-over for Armani's first U.S. fashion show in ten years. ("I like *that*," the former Mrs. Bono said, about either an unstructured parchment-colored linen jacket or the male model in it.) Cher started sassing her girlfriend, telling her she'd seen photographs of her and **Ted Danson** at a posh L.A. hotel. Whoopi laughed, "Fuck you," then said, "They [the tabloids] never take your feelings into account." Cher agreed but added her forthrightly ungenerous estimation of the victim of Ted and Whoopi's alleged affair (which both have denied having): "I never liked his wife anyway."

2

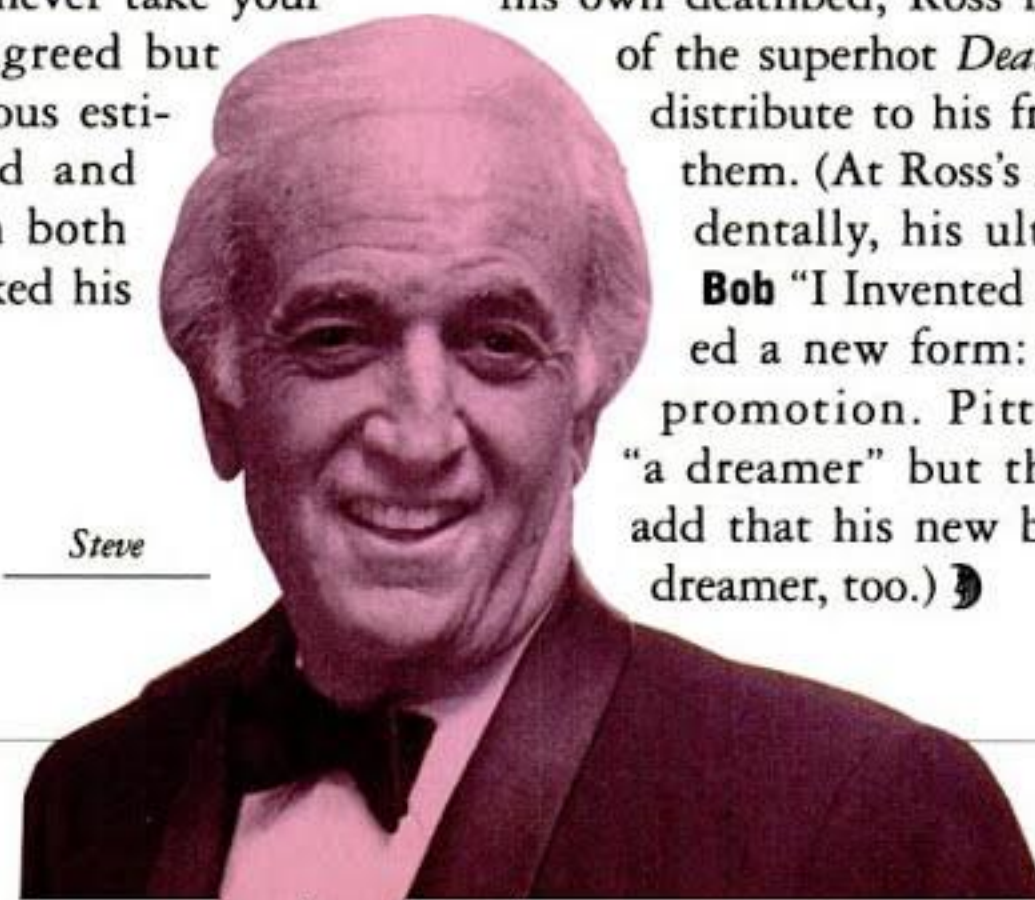
Shortly before the charmingly grotty but underpatronized



Cher



Shannen



Steve

Beverly Hills Hotel closed for a two-year renovation in December, it was cheering to see an actual TV star out front. Alas, the star was **Shannen (90210) Doherty**, in full, shrieking pseudo-Tourette's mode.

"What the fuck are you doing to my car?" she hollered at a valet who was moving it out of the driveway. Doherty wanted it to stay just in front of the entrance, where it would be most convenient for her. An adult bystander pointed out that other cars couldn't come and go. "If I fucking wanted your fucking opinion, I'd fucking ask for it," Doherty replied. "How dare you speak to me," she added, to the valet, who hadn't uttered a word.

3

Lost in the media's *Überangst* over the passing of the Man of Steel last fall was the fact that DC Comics, wholly owned by Time Warner, had to go all the way to chairman **Steve Ross** to get permission to off its flagship character. But sometimes in life, as in comic books, justice prevails. From his own deathbed, Ross requested 1,000 copies of the superhot *Death of Superman* book to distribute to his friends. DC didn't have them. (At Ross's memorial service, incidentally, his ultra-ambitious protégé **Bob "I Invented MTV" Pittman** invented a new form: eulogy-as-career-self-promotion. Pittman lauded Ross as "a dreamer" but then felt compelled to add that his new boss, **Gerald Levin**, is a dreamer, too.)



Off the Wall **Dr. Michael Jackson** Diagnoses His Critics

"We *can* fly, you know," Michael Jackson once told *Newsweek*. "We just don't know how to think the right thoughts and levitate ourselves off the ground." And, of course, more recently, and with an equally firm grip on reality, he said, "I can't think of a better way to spread the message of world peace than by working with the NFL and being part of Super Bowl XXVII." Given these remarks, the derisive term that Jackson used most frequently in his television interview with Oprah Winfrey seems an awful lot like the pot calling the kettle...er, black?

ON RUMORS THAT...

...HE SLEEPS IN AN OXYGEN TANK:

"That story is so **crazy**....Don't believe these **crazy** stories."

...HE WANTED A WHITE BOY TO PLAY HIM AS A CHILD IN A PEPSI COMMERCIAL:

"That is so stupid...the most ridiculous, horrifying story I've ever heard. It's **crazy**....Stop believing these horrifying stories."

...HE HAS HAD PLASTIC SURGERY ON HIS EYES, CHEEBONES AND LIPS:

"They go too far....It's **crazy**."

...OPRAH WAS CONTRACTUALLY BOUND TO CALL HIM THE KING OF POP:

"It's **crazy**."

...HE TOLD PRESIDENT CLINTON HE HAD TO BE THE ONLY ONE

TO PERFORM AT THE INAUGURATION:

"That is horrible. That is the stupidest, **craziest** story I have ever heard....That is so stupid to me. I mean, it's **crazy**."

...HE HAS PROPOSED TO LIZ TAYLOR:

"I'm **crazy** about her."

—Randy Stanton

The Fine Print

by Jamie Malanowski

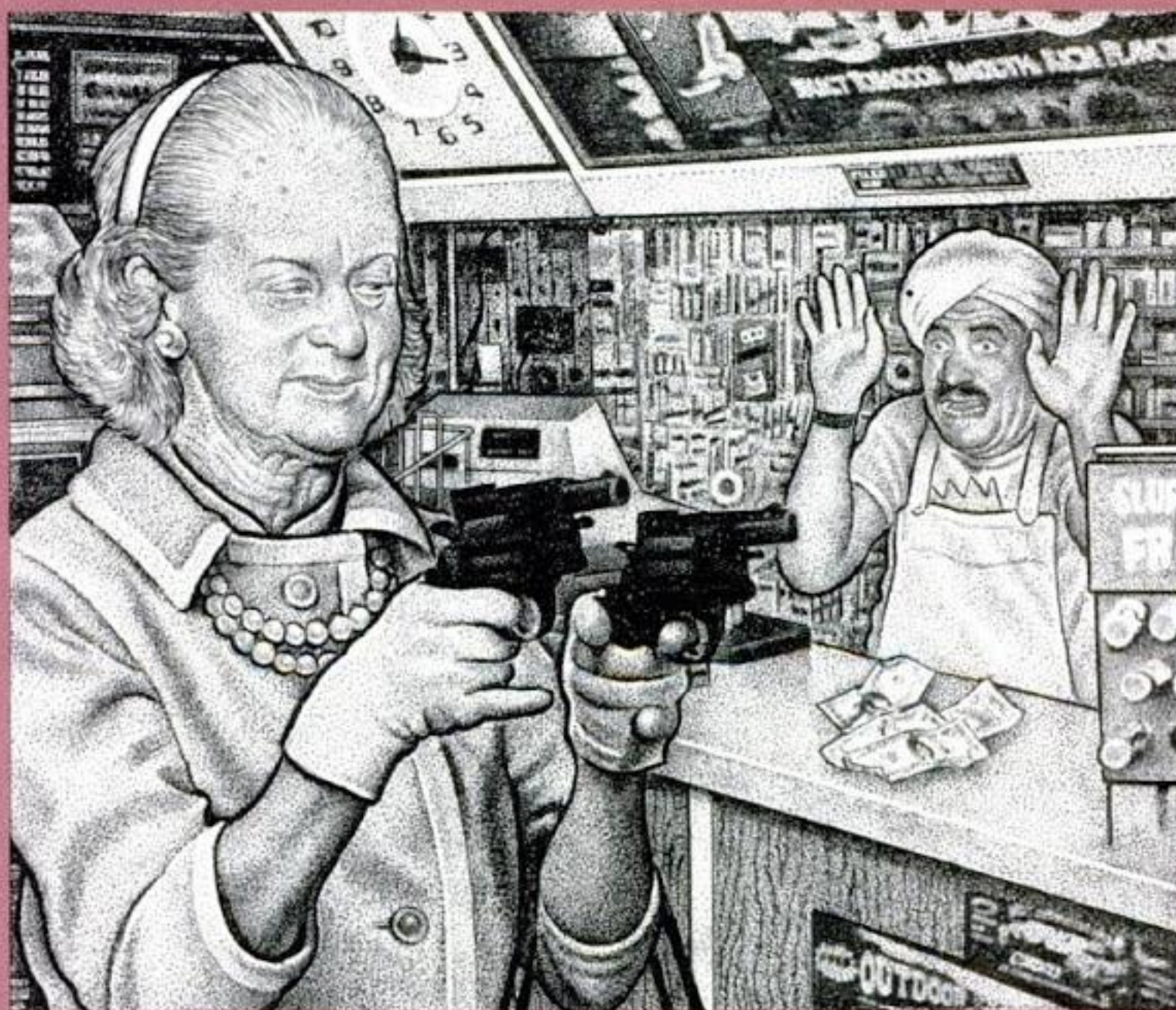


Does the Name Ruby Begonia Strike a Familiar Note?

Apparently even in New York, a city rife with crime, the life of a senior police official can be so tedious that private amusements are needed. A friend has sent us a list kept by one such (white) official to help pass the time, a roster of unusual names he had collected, not all in the line of duty:

Leandis Medley,
Stonewall Odom, Carleton St. Bernard, Fotis Taraskebaides, Dewitt Thrasher, Rakaldi Zinn, Neverson Hardley, Moses Venue, Rodrigo Geeds, Flywright Green, Pearly Peeples, Woody Head, Gladstone Swell, Hoptin Fray, Ivanhoe Bryant, Lensworth Nosworthy, Leroy Longmire, Dennis Womp, Baldwin Fangi, Heben Dunkley, Tribuneal Registra, Spurgeon Covington, Gary Cabbagestalk, Claude St. Come, Carl Master Ward Pegram, Broch Bloch, Venancious Ferguson, Lexi ▶

Private Lives of Public Figures



Former headmistress Jean Harris enjoys a taste of freedom.

Illustration by Drew Friedman

Funderburk, Robert
 Sherlock Holmes, Singletary
 Boe, Fluester McKoy,
 Lindberg Spears, Obedieth
 Belvin, Iona Blowe, Riggs
 Moody Touchberry,
 Maverick Boone, Pioneer
 Crump, Human Matthews,
 Herman M. Werman,
 Dionysios Lumpkin,
 Lemonis Adannis, Japel
 LeCunt, Dipper Cramer,
 Columbus Dicks, Samson
 Salami, Turnip Seed,
 Petroleum Bedford, Quo
 Vadis Burwell, Oxygen
 Smith, Mel Slappy, Perlay
 Bovain and the Rev. De
 Chicken La Holmes.



Never Can Say Goodbye

When the Prince Charles-Camilla Parker-Bowles transcript was leaked to the British press, most reporters focused on the so-called Tampax exchange. (To clear up some people's confusion: Charles did not liken himself to a tampon; he said he'd like to live inside Camilla's trousers, and when she asked if he was going to turn into a pair of knickers, he—in a self-pitying simile reminiscent of Prufrock's pair of ragged claws, scuttling across the floors of silent seas—replied, "Or, God forbid, a Tampax....My luck to be chucked down the lavatory and go on and on forever swirling round on the top, never going down.") Neglected, however, was our favorite part—the Pinteresque conclusion.

Camilla: Love you, darling.
Charles: Night, darling.
 I love you. ▶



The SPY Lazlo Letters

INSTALLMENT I

What Vice Presidents Do All Day Long

Despite the fact that superpatriot and voracious letter writer Lazlo Toth (alter ego of Don Novello in his books *The Lazlo Letters* and *Citizen Lazlo!*, above) was a steadfast supporter of the last couple of administrations—even accepting George Bush's invitation to become one of the first members of the Bush-Quayle '92 campaign from his state—he has embraced the New Covenant wholeheartedly and offered his unique brand of support. In this first monthly installment of The SPY Lazlo Letters, Toth's suggestions for cutting the deficit are characteristically well received.

Naked City



Lazlo Toth
 P.O. Box 245
 Fairfax, California
 94930 U.S.A.

Vice President Elect Albert Gore
 c/o Senator Albert Gore
 U.S. Senate
 Washington, D.C.

November 24, 1992

Dear Vice-President-Elect Gore,

Soon!, in less than two months, you will be going into office, and so I say, - Hello!

I am presently working on my application for a position in the new Administration (Department of the Deficit), and am looking forward to working with you in the coming years to make the Deficit a thing of the past once and for all! Together I know we can do it!

If you could thumbs up me and put in a good word for me when my name comes up in Little Rock I know you won't regret it! I have many ideas ready to go:

#1 - PET TAX! \$200 per year for Dog. \$155 for cat. Bird- \$82. Fish - \$15. Hamster - \$5. Mice - sixty-five cents each.

#2 - Make it possible so if people wanted to, they could bring their own food to restaurants and just pay a "kitchen tax" for seasonings, stove time and pot and pan use.

By spending less in restaurants, people will be able to save more and the interest on these savings will be TAXED, which will bring added revenue to Help America Knock Down The Deficit -H.A.K.D.T.D.!

#3 - Instead of starting a higher (36%) tax bracket for a family that makes \$200,000 or more per year, change the top rate to start at \$125,000 - the annual pay of a congressman. That will bring in a lot more revenue. There are 435 congressmen alone!

#4 - Let people turn in their taxes on April 17th - two days late! if they are willing to pay a \$25 fine which goes straight to pay off the deficit! You can procrastinate and bring down the deficit too!

#5 - At the Inauguration have a DEFICIT BALL, and people can pay (\$100 per couple) and then, not go! Don't even have it! The theme can be: "Don't be square, don't be there!" That money can go straight to pay off the Deficit! Save money on balloons, crate paper, etc.

H.A.K.D.T.D.!

Lazlo Toth

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT-ELECT
 AND VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT
 1120 Vermont Ave., N.W.
 Washington, DC 20270-0001

Al Gore

Lazlo Toth
 P.O. Box 245
 Fairfax, CA 94930

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT-ELECT
 AND VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT

I deeply appreciate your expression of support and encouragement. It's good to hear from you on issues of concern to you. I assure you that I will keep your views on these matters in mind. Al

THE TWISTED TALE OF UNTAMED TEENS AND THEIR SAVAGE
THIRST FOR "THE ONE WITH BITE"...

Barq's
ROOT BEER

SEE!

WHEN THEY
COULDN'T GET
BARQ'S®...
THEY GOT BAD!

Barq's ROOT BEER RAMPAGE

ROOT BEER-CRAZED
KIDS GETTING THEIR
KICKS FROM A CAN!
...OF BARQ'S®!

FROM THE PEOPLE
WHO BROUGHT YOU:

"Barq's DIET ROOT BEER RIOT"

Introducing
**VERA
ST. VEGAS**
Miss BARQ'S
Root Beer 1959
as **TINA**
She tossed men
away like empty
BARQ'S cans when
she was done with them!

They lived fast —and drank BARQ'S®!



SEE! Two lust-filled boys, fighting
over the same... can of BARQ'S!



SEE! BARQ'S Root Beer
consumed at 120 miles per hour!



SEE! The dizzying amount of
root beer in a BARQ'S
2-liter bottle!

**EXPERIENCE
BITE-O-RAMA™**

EVERY TIME YOU DRINK A
BARQ'S ROOT BEER
THE ONE WITH BITE.

Copyrighted material

Love you too....I don't want to say goodbye....
 Night night.
 Night, darling. God bless.
 I do love you, and I'm so proud of you.
 I'm so proud of you....
 Oh, darling, don't be silly....Night night.
 Night, darling....Night night....
 Love you.
 Don't want to say goodbye.
 Neither do I, but you must get some sleep. Bye.
 Bye, darling.
 I love you.
 Bye....
 Bye, I love you.
 Night.
 Night.
 Night.
 Love you forever.
 Night.
 G'bye—bye, my darling.
 Night.
 Night night.
 Night.
 Bye bye.
 Going.
 Bye.
 Going.
 Gone.
 Night.
 Bye. Press the button.
 Going to press the tit.
 All right, darling, I wish you were pressing mine.
 God, I wish I was.
 Harder and harder.
 Oh, darling!
 Night.
 Night.
 I love you.
 Love you. Press the tit.
 Adore you. Night.
 Night.
 Night.
 [She blows a kiss.]
 Night.
 Good night, my darling. Love you. ☾

April Datebook

Enchanting and Alarming Events Upcoming

1 Holy Humor
 Month begins, sponsored by The Fellowship of Merry Christians Inc. of Portage, Michigan.

Unmerry Christians react grimly to the Fellowship's contention that early theologians considered the Resurrection "a cosmic joke that God played on Satan... the most phenomenal practical joke in the history of the world."



2 Red Nose Day
 USA in Columbia, Maryland. The National Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Foundation encourages folks to wear red noses to make their concern for saving babies' lives "as plain as the nose on your face." President Clinton replaces outgoing poster boy, Senator Ted Kennedy.

11 Easter.
 Ha ha ha.

13 Superman
 rises from the

dead in *Adventures of Superman* No. 500. Work at the SPY mailroom grinds to a halt.

13-18 World
 Gymnastics Championships; Birmingham, England. Regulars at Elaine's wonder if Woody has the flu or something.

14 Last day
 to catch "Revolution, Life, and Labor: Soviet Porcelains, 1918-1985" at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York City. The exhibition "illustrates how



the message of the new socialist order was sent out not only through newspapers and radio, but also by way of cups and saucers, platters and decorative figures."

16 The New York Pops
 presents "An Evening with Marvin Hamlisch"; Carnegie Hall. No refunds.

19-23 National
 Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. AIDS-ribbon wearers mistaken for intestine donors.

23 Herve
 Villechaize turns 50. *Da pain, da pain!*

28 The First 100
 Days of the Clinton Administration Eve. Desperate late-night calls to Barbra and Maya go unreturned.

29 First anniversary
 of the Los Angeles riots. Fireworks. ☾

Logrolling in Our Time



"A work of courage and compassion, virtuosity and intelligence. Johnson has enriched contemporary American fiction as few writers can."

—Stanley Crouch on Charles Johnson's *Oxherding Tale*

"Balls-to-the-wall courage....If we ignore this ground-breaking book, or its author, future generations simply will not forgive us."

—Johnson on Crouch's *Notes of a Hanging Judge*

"Nobody in America does it better....Arthur Schlesinger somehow manages to combine the timeliness of journalism with the scope of history."

—James Reston on Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s *The Cycles of American History*

"A great newspaperman looks back on our times in a splendid memoir salted with humor, insight and meditative wisdom."

—Schlesinger on Reston's *Deadline*



"You won't be doing anything of importance until you have finished this novel."

—Carolyn See on Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*

"Carolyn See is a brave and brilliant writer, a risk-taker and a visionary."

—Tan on See's *Making History*

—Howard Kaplan

Ask Camille Paglia

Advice for the Lovelorn,

Among Others

Dear Camille: I'm in my late twenties and haunt L.A. coffee-houses searching for an intellectually stimulating female partner among the patrons. But I find myself more attracted to the waitresses. In the Male-Confused-'90s, I fear that making advances on these working women is sexual harassment. Is it wrong to flirt with them?

Anxious Alex

Dear Anxious: I too get starry-eyed over waitresses. I suspect there is a Cosmic Mammary archetype behind all this. Waitresses have more on the ball, anyhow, than the chichi literati you're pursuing. Proceed cautiously, but give it a shot.

* * *

Dear Camille: I'm an attractive 23-year-old gay male. In bars, I notice that attractive men usually have ugly boyfriends. Why is this? How am I supposed to get a boyfriend when all the good ones are dating Ernest Borgnine look-alikes? When I *do* meet someone who doesn't need a bag over his head, he turns out to be a flaky, slutty jerk.

Single in Seattle

Dear Single: A lesson of eros—only one megastar per household, please. Every god needs a priest in polyester.

* * *

Dear Camille: Two buddies of mine who live thousands of miles from each other were unceremoniously dumped a couple of years ago by their girlfriends. Right after chucking their excess baggage, both girls adopted all the significant traits of their former boyfriends. One went from being a pampered trust-fund baby who read Woolf and subscribed to trendy political causes to being an



TO THE MANY
READERS WHO ASKED ME
FOR A DATE:

*I am reviewing applications
from all genders. But
why hasn't Drew Barrymore
written to me yet?*

ardent backpacker in love with Conrad. The other changed her major from environmental science to classical anthropology and philosophy and her music from Depeche Mode to the Lime Spiders. You get the picture. Why would these women become the men they no longer love?

Musing in Kankakee

Dear Musing: I am stunned by this colorful evidence of the ancient principle of female vampirism, recorded everywhere in world mythology. Having sucked men dry, like marrow from a bone, woman calmly sails on to her next adventure. Sublime!

* * *

Dear Camille: I supplement my unemployment checks by selling phone-sex scripts. I'd rather sell short stories, but nobody's buying. I seem to have a knack for

cranking the stuff out. But I don't know whether to think of myself as a cheap media whore or a valuable public servant. Nothing gobs up the creative flow more than the image of a fat, lonely, middle-aged insurance salesman lying on his bed and pulling on his weenie while he listens to my words coming over the line. He and millions of other schmucks may need the help of a prosthetic imagination. Perhaps I am helping to release potentially dangerous sexual energy in a quick, tidy gush at the end of the day.

Pondering in Portland


Dear Pondering: Though it might seem like a drainage ditch, you too labor in the vineyards of art. Apollo and Aphrodite bless all makers of erotic images.

* * *

Dear Camille: My girlfriend and I have a running argument about the last scene in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*. I guess I'm WASPY and prosaic, but I think it's about having sex with a dog. My lover is French, however, and claims she cannot understand it this way, having read Lacan and Derrida. The argument becomes so heated that I wonder if I can live with a poststructuralist. What do I do?

Stymied in North Carolina

Dear Stymied: How did your post-structuralist escape deportation? I heard they were reclassified as illegal aliens. Take her to McDonald's and deprogram her. If that doesn't work, box her and return to sender.

Actual responses from Camille Paglia can be obtained by writing actual letters about actual problems to Ask Camille Paglia, SPY, 5 Union Square West, New York, N.Y. 10003. All letters become the property of SPY. 

Yo, Entertainment!

Ice-T's Farewell Tribute to Warner Bros.

Warner Bros. Records recently announced that it was releasing the anti-authoritarian misogynist rapper Ice-T from his contract, citing "creative differences." Huh? *What* creative differences?

THE PUBLIC ENEMY (Warner Bros., 1931) Gangster blows away this cop. Punches this one bitch in the face and smacks this other bitch with a grapefruit.

THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD (1938) Outlaws cut this sheriff and get his bitch.

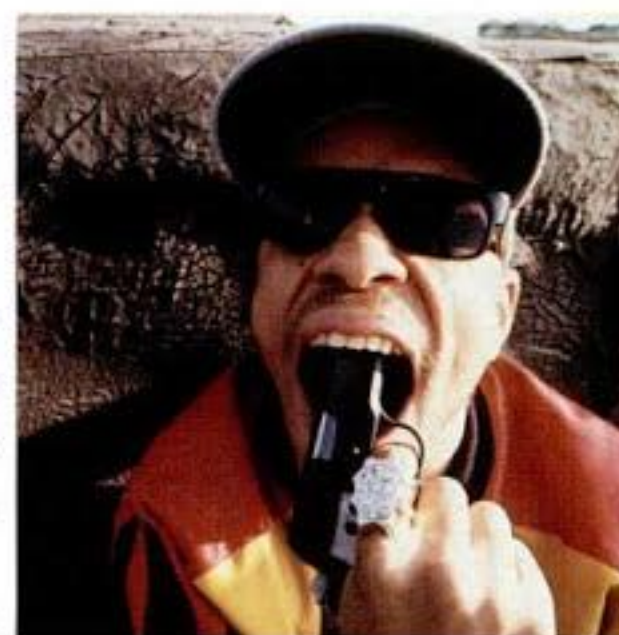
THE MALTESE FALCON (1941) Cops think this guy offed this other guy, because he was doing the guy's bitch.

THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE (1948) Corrupt cops get dusted by outlaws.

KISS TOMORROW GOODBYE (1950) Gangsters break out of jail, then off each other. One beats this bitch and fucks her. She likes it.

STRANGERS ON A TRAIN (1951) This guy hates his wife. He meets another guy on a train, and that guy strangles the bitch.

EAST OF EDEN (1955) This guy's mom can't help being a whore.



OCEAN'S ELEVEN (1960) Gangsters get all the bitches they want. Cops can't touch them.

ROBIN AND THE SEVEN HOODS (1964) Gangsters get all the bitches they want. Cops can't touch them.

A FINE MADNESS (1966) Cops persecute a street poet. Bitches ride his ass day and night. In the last scene he punches this one bitch right in the face.

THE WILD BUNCH (1969) This gang of outlaws all get blown away while being chased by cops. One almost makes it, but he gets offed by a whore.

DIRTY HARRY (1971) Racist psycho pulls this bitch's teeth out and buries her alive. Psycho cop dusts him.

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (1971) Outlaw rapes this bitch. Then he rapes this other bitch. Cops torture him and try to drown him, but they can't break him. MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER (1971) Pimp wants his own whorehouse. Guys try to blow him away, but he blows them away while they blow him away. The head whore is too strung out to even care.

MAGNUM FORCE (1973) Pimp pours Drano down this whore's throat. Traffic cops form a death squad. They get blown away.

TIME AFTER TIME (1980) Back in old London, this guy is cutting whores. He gets in a time machine and cuts whores in 1979 too.

OUTLAND (1981) In outer space, this guy is gonna cut this whore until he gets offed by corrupt cops.

SHARKY'S MACHINE (1981) This whore gets offed. Cops protect this other really expensive whore. They all get blown away.

PRINCE OF THE CITY (1981) Corrupt New York cops deal drugs and supply drugs to informant whores.

BLADE RUNNER (1982) In the future, this racist police chief makes this guy blow away these two robot whores.

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE (1990) This guy tried to off this bitch. But he's rich and has a Jewish lawyer, so he gets away with it.

UNFORGIVEN (1992) A guy cuts a whore. So this outlaw blows away a racist cop. —Chris Kelly

Celebrity Math Chapter 3



Diana Ross

Benito Mussolini

Prince

Madonna - Marilyn Monroe = Michael Milken

(Al Gore x Rock Hudson) - 1 = Christopher Reeve

Robert Plant x (Joni Mitchell + Kurt Waldheim) = Axl Rose
1/2 Liberace

Luciano Pavarotti + John Gotti - Dom DeLuise = Frank Sinatra
Wayne Newton

—Mark O'Donnell and Marion Rosenfeld

Maybe We'll Just Wait for the Continental Drift to Go into Reverse

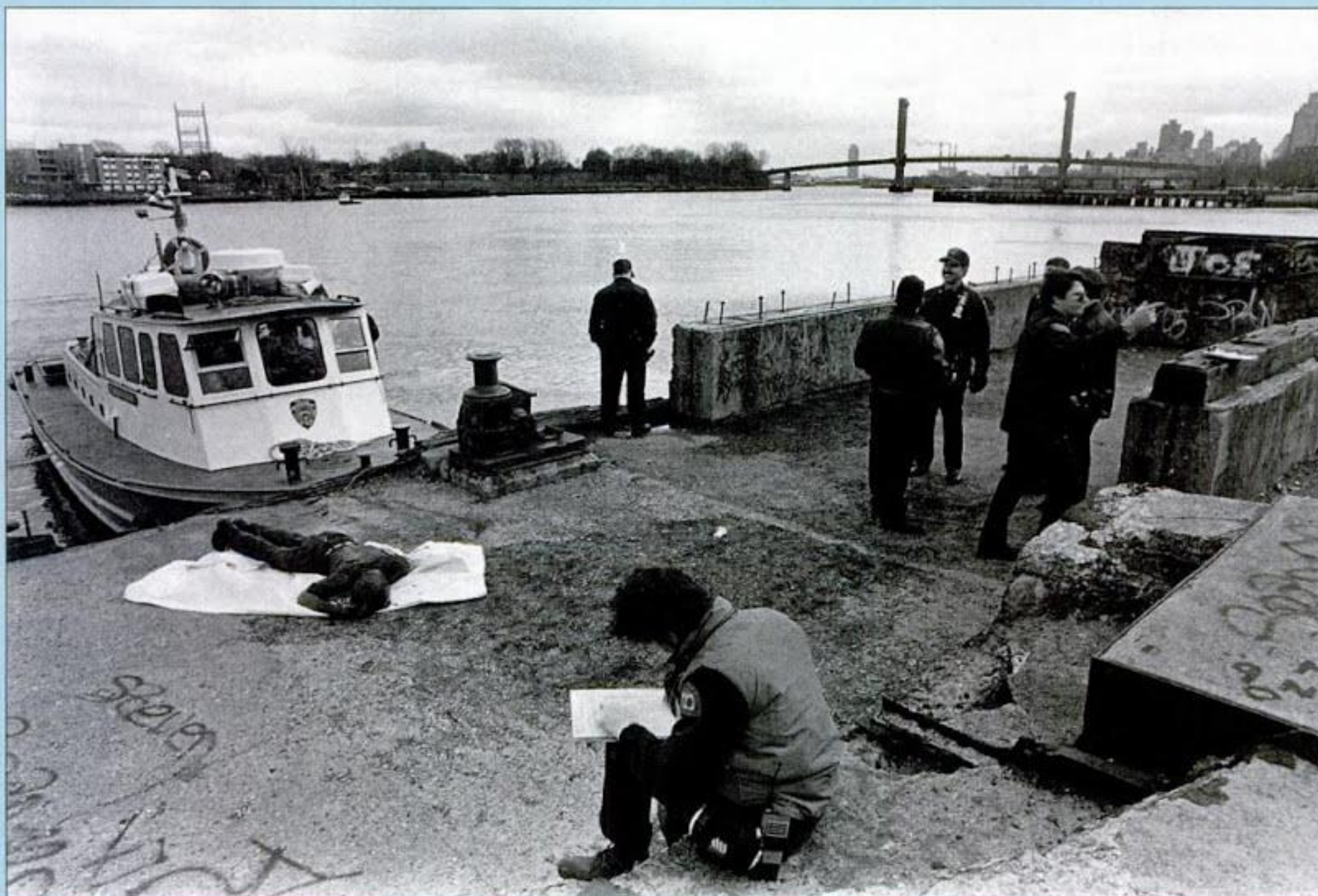
A Look at the New Non-Frequent-Flier Premiums

We've been tempted by those advertisements for "Air Miles," the program in which you mail in product proofs of purchase to accumulate airline mileage. We sent in the enrollment form and got a program brochure—"Before you know it," it gushed, "you're flying free!"—that enabled us to calculate how much stuff we'd have to buy to earn the 7,256 miles round trip to Paris. —R. E. Neu



| PRODUCT | UNIT | MILES YOU GET | HOW MANY YOU NEED | TOTAL COST | WHEN YOU'LL REACH PARIS |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Cap'n Crunch cereal | 16-ounce box | 1 | 7,256 boxes | \$28,081 | 1 box a day = A.D. 2012 |
| Gorton's Crunchy Fish Fillets | box of 6 fillets | 1/2 | 14,512 boxes | \$55,000 | 1 box a day = 2032 |
| People magazine | one-year subscription | 100 | 72.56 years | \$5,622 | 2065 |
| Fresh Step cat litter | 7-pound bag | 1 | 7,256 bags | \$18,575 | 1 bag/week = 2132 |
| Ultra "all" laundry detergent | 18-load box | 1 | 7,256 boxes (130,608 loads) | \$31,273 | 1 load/day = 2350 |
| ScotTissue | 4-roll pack | 1 | 7,256 packs (29,024 rolls) | \$17,052 | 1 roll/day = 2072 |

It's a Wonderful Town!



Body recovered from the East River at 111th Street in Manhattan.

Photograph by Andrew Savulich

The Paper of Record, Sort Of

Is it a leading indicator in the current Age of Ambivalence? Or is it just creeping laziness among the editors of America's most important newspaper? Whatever the reasons, headlines in *The New York Times* have acquired over the last few years a formulaic wry weaseliness. From 1982 to '86 there were around 30 such headlines in the *Times*, and between 1987 and '90 the rate increased to about once a month. But then during the last two years the floodgates opened; it's now one a week. Below is a representational catalog, according to the Nexis data base.

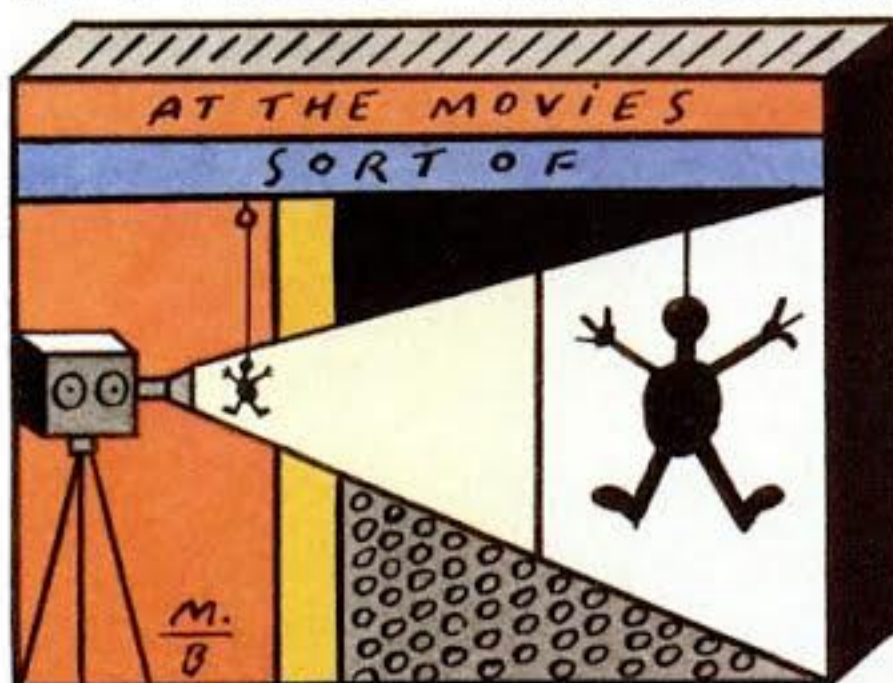
1/8/93: Disarming Somalia, Sort Of. **1/4/93:** NASA Photographs an Asteroid Giving Earth a Close Shave, Sort Of. **1/1/93:** A Sort of Neighbor Remembers Shawn. **12/6/92:** Rangers Get Lowe, Sort Of. **12/6/92:** Even the Speechwriters Are Sort of Speechless. **11/29/92:** Elections in Peru; A Vote of Confidence

(Well, Sort Of). **11/28/92:** From Masur, an 1881 Program, Sort Of. **11/17/92:** A Book, of Sorts, in Your Pocket. **11/15/92:** How Very English, Sort Of. **10/11/92:** Tories Back Major on Europe Treaty. Sort Of. **9/27/92:** At the Movies, Sort Of. **9/13/92:** The Real New York, Sort Of. **9/3/92:** Parthenons of a Sort. **8/26/92:** A Sort of "Super Serb" Defends Serbian Policy. **8/11/92:** Why Did She Kill? It Just Sort of Happened. **8/3/92:** The Gory Preoccupations of a Scary Sort of Elvis. **7/31/92:** A Koch Soapbox (Sort Of) for the Civic Answer Man. **7/29/92:** A Floating Game of Sorts. **7/15/92:** Party Politics of a Different Sort. **7/11/92:** One Reporter Gets the Scoop on Gore, Sort Of. **7/10/92:** Button-Down Man Meets a Rock Legend, Sort Of. **6/20/92:** Tripucka Is a Net, Sort Of. **6/16/92:** The Boss Explains (Sort Of). **5/28/92:** Cleaners Who Do Windows (Sort Of). **4/23/92:** Paring Down for the 90's (Well, Sort Of). **3/1/92:** Heavy Snow in Israel Helps the Trains, Sort Of. **2/28/92:** Romance Takes a Holiday,

of Sorts. **2/2/92:** Helping Hand, of Sorts. **11/24/91:** An Apology, of Sorts, from a Senator. **10/25/91:** Police Union Says Calling Poor Shiftless Was Just a Joke, Sort Of. **10/14/91:** Putting Shakespeare, Sort Of, Aboard a Spaceship. **8/4/91:** John McCormack as Film Star, Sort Of. **5/12/91:** Valentino Even Sang, Sort

Of. **4/28/91:** Gorbachev Agrees, Sort Of, to Negotiate the State of Union. **3/31/91:** American on Their Own Terms; Feeling American—Sort Of. **2/23/91:** Bush and Gorbachev Converse Person to Person, Sort Of. **2/10/91:** A Victory of Sorts. **1/22/91:** A New York Super Bowl, Sort Of. **3/2/89:** Cuomo and Koch Agree, Sort Of, on Commission. **1/18/89:** Nets

Win 19th for a Milestone, of Sorts. **11/20/88:** Homesteading Is Alive, and Sort of Well, in Alaska. **7/8/87:** Tightrope Walking—Well, Sort Of—at Clown Parade. **10/22/86:** Cuomo Visits Upstate Cities to Campaign—Well, Sort Of. **10/11/85:** An Abstract Show, Sort Of, at the Modern Museum. **2/11/84:** Japanese Celebrate, Sort Of, a Patriotic Day Today. **9/27/83:** In the Battle of the Restaurants, a Winner, Sort Of. **5/26/82:** Turning the Tables, Sort Of, on a Critic. **7/15/81:** Reggie Jackson's Stolen Car Recovered, Sort Of. **6/8/80:** Primaries '80: Once Again the System Worked, Sort Of. —Patrick Cooke



Separated at Birth?



Eddie Van Halen... and Sara Gilbert?



Clark Clifford... and Orville Redenbacher?



Desi Arnaz... and Dirk Bogarde?

The Top Ten Reasons Why David Letterman Should Visit Webster Hall

10. Donald Trump is not there.
9. No checking of Filofaxes.
8. 40,000 square feet of adventure.
7. Marla Maples is not there either.
6. There is no home office.
5. The Jay Leno look-alike
washroom attendant.
4. No stupid pet tricks.
3. We start at 10pm not 12:30am.
2. 5 levels of bohemian elegance.
1. This ain't no disco!

W E B S T E R H A L L
125 East Eleventh Street New York City 353-1600

9 WEST 14th STREET NEW YORK 10011 212-242-0314



UNION SQUARE OPTICAL



BIG PICTURES

This month: Grody Kissinger, detritus of the oil-rich, Madonna scrutinized and Magic's favorite flavor. Plus: uncovered Garbo discovered. **April 1993**



Thinking he is outside normal etiquette jurisdiction, Henry Kissinger busies himself at a recent conference in Brazil.



SPY **BIG PICTURES**

Ecology today at
the car cemetery in
Al-Jahrah, Kuwait



SPY *BIG PICTURES*





Madonna—not technically on the runway herself—at a Versace fashion show in Paris (*left*); Magic Johnson slurping an ice cream cone in Monaco (*right*)

SPY BIG PICTURES





THE NEXT
OPERATION IS
AT



The British Royal Army Medical Corps performs a jolly mock amputation at a public demonstration in Dorset.

SPY *BIG PICTURES*

Lost portrait of the young
Greta Garbo, discovered
recently in a Stockholm
antiques store



SPY WEAR BY PHONE



New SPY Cotton Cap \$13.95

Unbleached 100% cotton cap with red SPY logo, brim and adjustable strap. One size fits all.



also available...

The perfect tees, a heavy-duty sweatshirt and a classic hat!

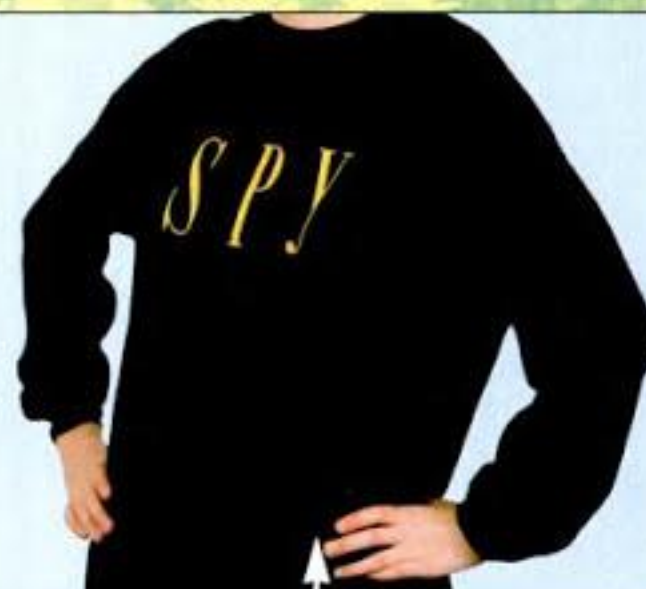


Classic SPY Hat \$8.95

Black 100% cotton cap with classic yellow SPY logo and adjustable leather strap. One size fits all.

The New SPY Sweatshirt \$39.95

Natural 95% white cotton heavyweight crossweave sweatshirt with embroidered red logo. M, L, XL

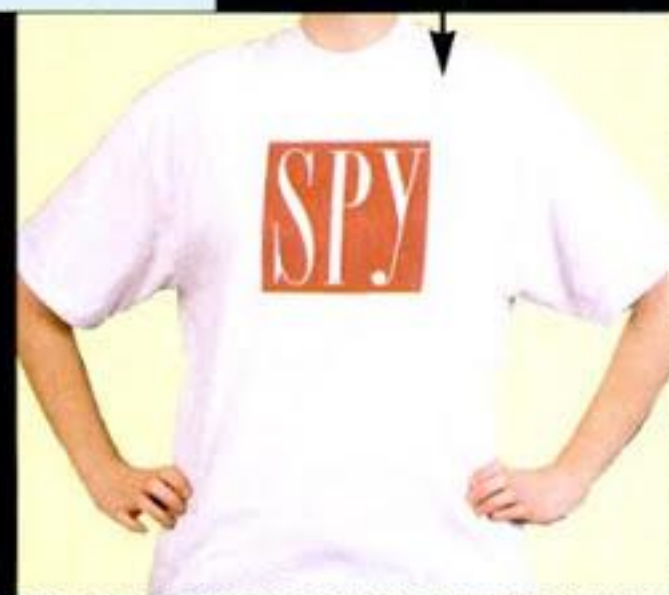


Short-Sleeve Beefy-T \$12

100% cotton, comes in black with classic yellow SPY logo, or white with new red SPY logo. M, L, XL

Long-Sleeve Beefy-T \$15

100% cotton, comes in black with classic yellow SPY logo, or white with new red SPY logo. M, L, XL



| QTY | ITEM | BLACK | WHITE | SIZE (S) | \$ |
|-----|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----|
| | The SPY Sweatshirt | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | Long Sleeve Beefy-T | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | Short-Sleeve Beefy-T | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | The Unbleached SPY Hat | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | Classic Black SPY Hat | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED (plus \$2 shipping & handling)

Name

Address

City

State

ZIP

Credit Card Number

Exp. Date

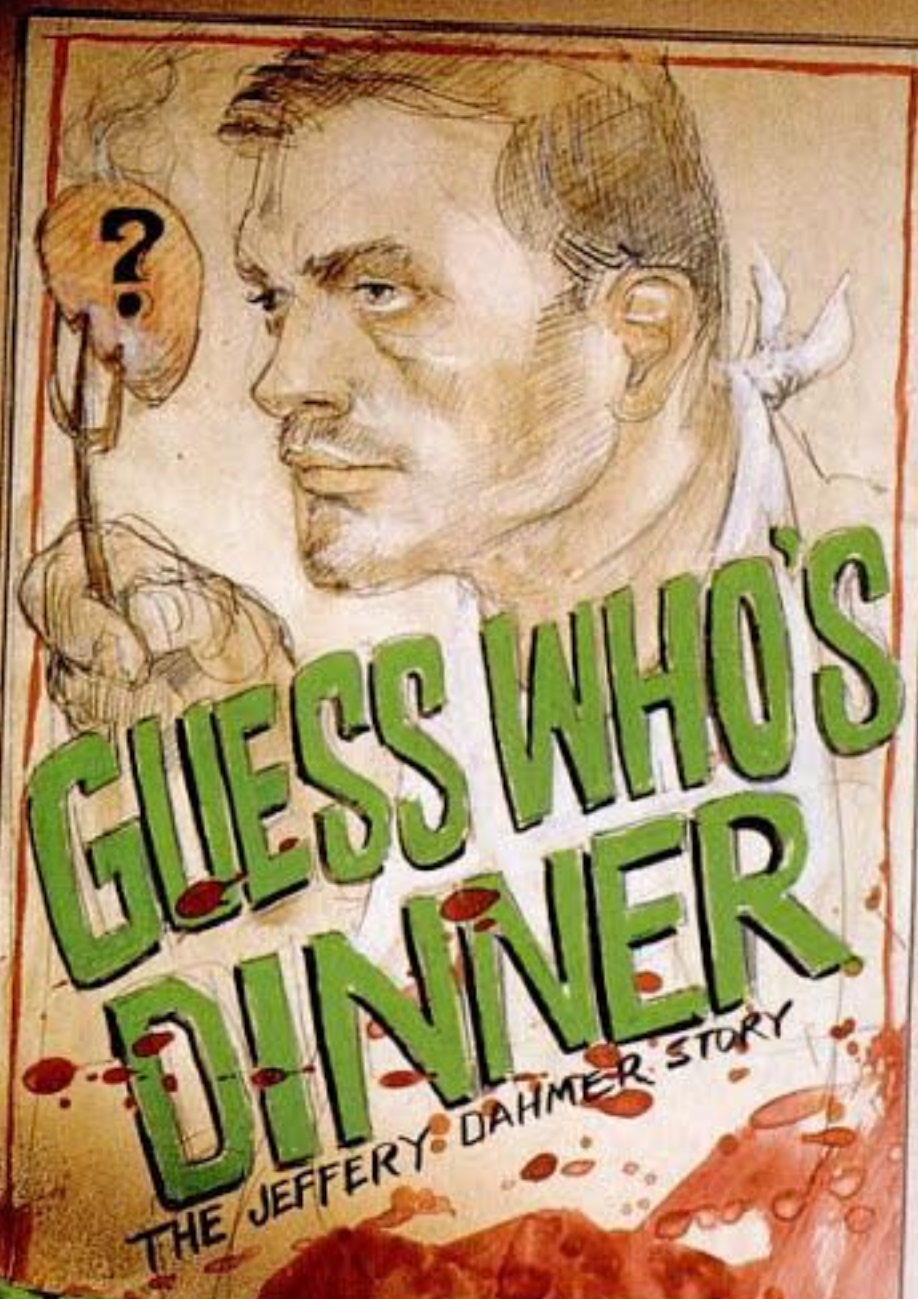
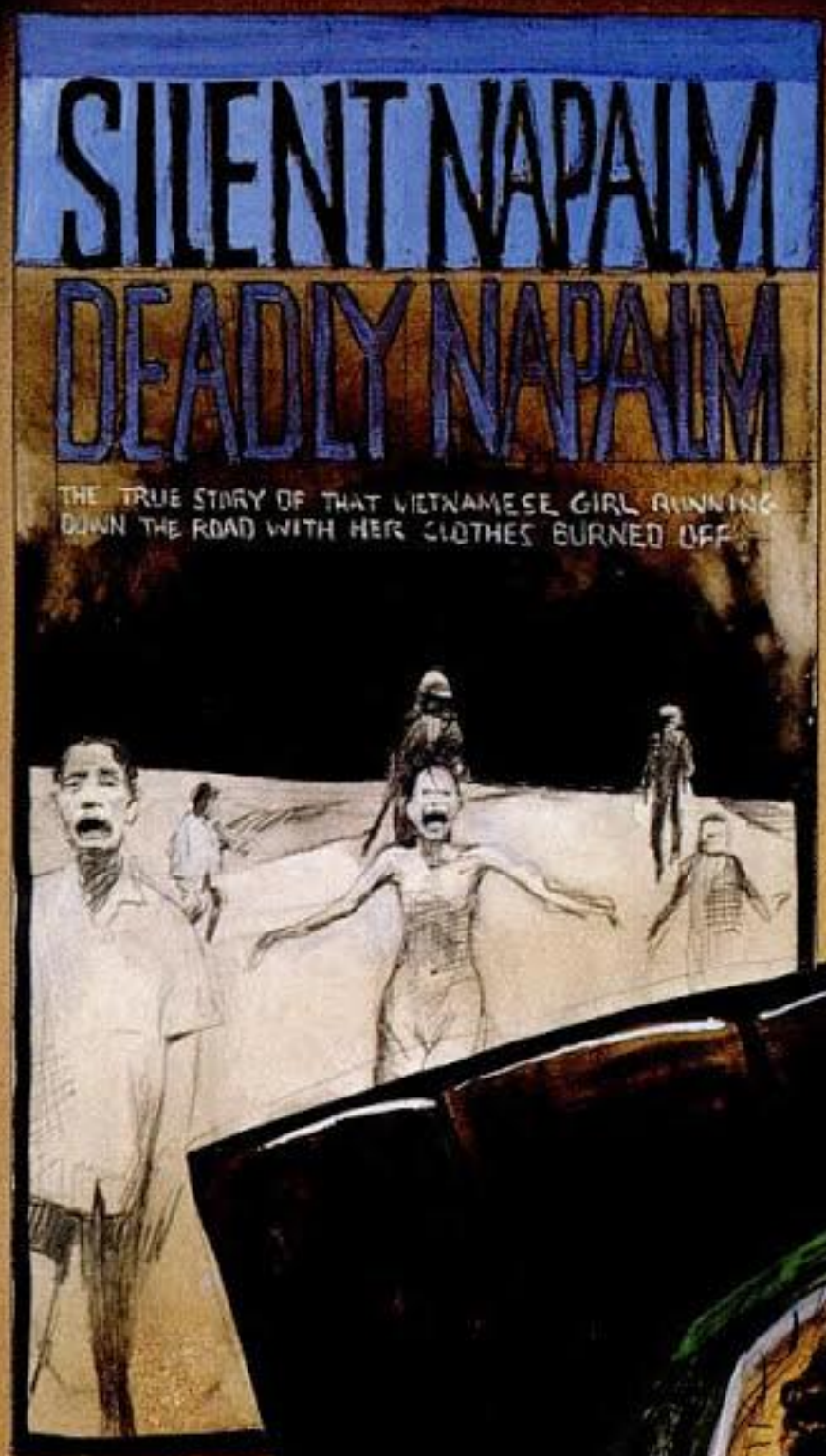
Signature

Tel. (daytime)

Method of Payment:

☐ Check ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Amex

Enclose a check or money order (no cash accepted; N.Y. residents include 8.25% sales tax). Specify quantity, detach coupon and mail to SPY Wear, The SPY Building, 5 Union Square West, New York, N.Y. 10003. Offer limited to the U.S. and Canada. Canadian residents, please pay additional U.S. \$2.50 per item. Good only while supply lasts. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. For subscription information dial 1-800-333-8128.



TR

FIRE IN MY BELLY - LARRY FLYNT
STORY

KNEEL DOWN & PRAY
THE FATHER RITTER STORY

IN TANK'S WAY
THE TRUE STORY OF THAT CHINESE
STUDENT, YOU KNOW THE ONE



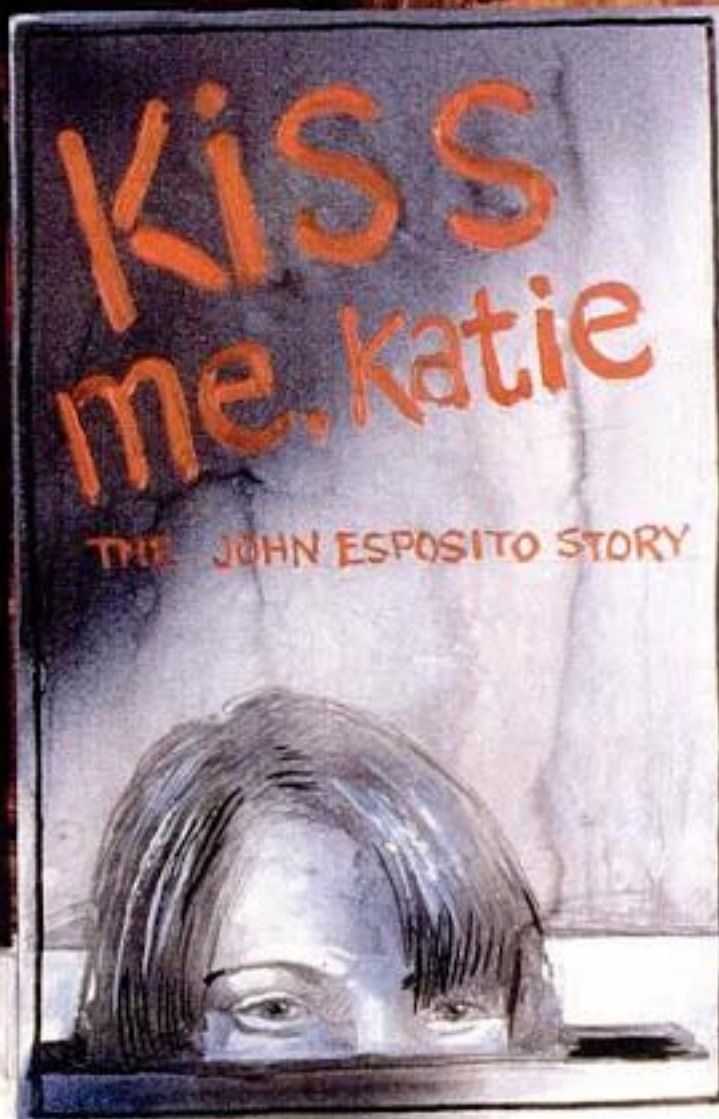
THURSDAY, JANUARY 14
Never mind the headline: GIRL, MISSING FOR 16 DAYS, IS FOUND IN SECRET ROOM. One look at that brave pixie's photo and Ron Yatter knows that Katie Beers has pitchability. Hers is not a seedy story about white-trash child-rearing, serial pedophilia and a damp, urine-drenched dungeon. "It's about

the triumph of the spirit of a young girl able to overcome adversity," Yatter, an independent "packaging agent," tells SPY in a unique patter honed during 25 years at the William Morris Agency. As Yatter spins the tale, Katie Beers is not a sad victim of neglect and abuse but rather "a combination of Cinderella and Oliver Twist."

In Los Angeles, Gloria Morrison, a bulk-disaster specialist (Hurricane Andrew, the 1991 sinking of the cruise ship *Ocanos*), sees Katie's face on television and pictures "a story of a little girl who slipped through society's safety net." Intrigued, Morrison considers calling the child-protection agency responsible for Katie but decides "they wouldn't

A MONTH IN THE VICTIM-OF-THE-WEEK BUSINESS

THE STORY!



want to talk to people like us." Meanwhile, people like her—including producers with deals at TriStar and Hearst television—are already making exploratory phone calls to police, prosecutors and Katie's mom's lawyer. One ICM agent is leaving frantic messages with the Suffolk County D.A.'s Office.

Howard Braunstein spots Katie in *The New York Times*, which he skims for future projects every morning before going into Michael Jaffe Films, on Sunset Boulevard. Braunstein is surprised that even the staid

ILLUSTRATION BY DAN SWEETMAN

Times is giving Katie the tabloid treatment. "It's very dark, very tragic. Horrific. I have reservations about it," he says, groping for exactly the right word. "Iii-ick!"

Katie is a momentary distraction for Braunstein. Right now he is preoccupied with the people in the snow, as they are known in the business. Four days after Christmas, Jim Stolpa made a wrong turn in a Nevada wilderness area during a blizzard. After five days stuck in the snow, Stolpa left his young wife and infant son in a cave and, for two days, sustained only by snow, trudged 48 miles before finding help. His feet were frozen solid and had to be partially amputated.

"This is a story about commitment," says Braunstein. "People who go to the altar and say, 'We are going to hang together and make it work.' And man against nature, survival."

Braunstein is planning to fly up to talk numbers with the Stolpas, and he knows he'll be competing with TriStar, Lorimar (which Time Warner owns), Citadel (a subsidiary of HBO, which Time Warner also owns) and Warner Bros. itself, among others. He decides to put little Katie Beers on the back burner, figuring the story will take a while to play out. If he loses it, "I don't have to panic," he philosophizes. "There is always another story."

JANUARY 15 Marilyn Beers, who has habitually handed off her child since birth and readily surrendered custody to the state two days earlier, has had a change of heart, according to her attorney, John Jiras, who also happens to be a close friend of her psychic, John Monti. Linda Inghilleri, Katie's godmother and the wife of one of the men accused of sexually molesting her, wails to anyone who will listen, "When Katie was freed from the vault...my little girl should have been placed in my arms."

The Suffolk County Family Court, in an unusual display of good sense, decides to hold on to Katie a bit longer.

Meanwhile, there is growing,

touching, heartfelt concern that Katie may get squeezed out of the movie action. Eric Naiburg, Amy Fisher's attorney, offers to represent Katie pro bono. Even before Katie was found, Naiburg had spoken to her mother about putting together a movie deal. But though his latest offer makes the local TV news and *Entertainment Weekly*, Naiburg doesn't get any callbacks from the state or Marilyn Beers.

There is no time to waste. "Each

stories. Consequently, when producers pitch an idea to the networks, they no longer carry a script but the rights—or at least an option. David Ginsburg, president of Citadel Pictures, one of the biggest producers of TV movies, recently pitched a story to a network executive who loved it. "It's a great plot, great characters, great dialogue," said the executive. "Is it true?" Unfortunately, it was only a best-selling novel, and so the executive took a pass.

"THIS IS A STORY ABOUT NATURE, SURVIVAL," BRAUNSTEIN SAYS

time someone related to this case goes on tabloid shows, the price diminishes," Naiburg's law partner, Matthew Rosenblum, tells us. "We're sympathetic. Eric wants to do something for this kid."

It makes sense for them to represent Katie, Rosenblum says, since in the wake of Amy Fisher "everyone from Hollywood knows us."

That evening, Madonna delivers a mock homage to Sinéad O'Connor on *Saturday Night Live*. Shouting "Fight the real enemy!," she tears up a picture of Joey Buttafuoco.

JANUARY 17 At 7:00 p.m., *The Ernest Green Story*, the true story of a black student who integrated a Little Rock high school in 1957, airs on the Disney Channel. At 9:00 p.m., CBS airs *The Switch*, the true story of a paralyzed man who sued to control his life-support system, and ABC airs the first part of the two-part *Telling Secrets*, the true story of a Phoenix femme fatale who had her husband's girlfriend whacked, which ABC describes cheerfully as "inspired by actual events which truly are stranger than fiction."

And truly more marketable. In the past year, industry sources estimate, more than half the made-for-TV movies were based on true

Networks like true stories because they deliver a guaranteed audience without the messy guesswork of a fictional script. They don't have to promote the movies heavily, because *A Current Affair*, *Hard Copy*, *Geraldo*, *Donahue*, *Oprah*, *20/20* and *PrimeTime Live* are happy to do that for them over and over again.

Until recently, true stories were a bargain as well. Rights to true stories went for as little as a few thousand dollars, and even the biggest stories went for \$200,000 tops.

Then, alas, Amy Fisher put a bullet into Mary Jo Buttafuoco's head.

JANUARY 18 At 7:30 a.m. a bullet flies through the window of Joey Buttafuoco's Long Island auto-body shop, whizzing right past Joey's head or into an empty room, depending on whom you believe. The Buttafuocos' lawyer, Marvyn Kornberg, blames the incident on Madonna, decrying the dangers posed "when people with a cult following tear up his picture."

Both Buttafuoco and Kornberg are feeling persecuted lately. Although there were 25 offers for the Buttafuoco rights, Kornberg says, he eventually went with East Coast crime-story-rights queen Diane Sokolow and TriStar, because they

"offered the most"—as much as \$300,000 (as well as the opportunity for Joey to walk around a movie set wearing sunglasses and talking into a cellular phone). But Kornberg now claims he was ripped off. "Most producers offer a certain amount, [but] when they can't get it back from the networks, they ask for money back," he says. "It's all part of the game."

At 9:00 p.m., NBC airs *Desperate Rescue: The Cathy Mahone Story*.

needs money."

How much? "Fifteen hundred dollars for her; \$1,500 for me."

Although the rights to the exclusive story of the selling of Katie Beers's rights are tempting, SPY declines. Jiras seems unfazed; he doesn't need SPY: "TV Guide has expressed interest."

TV Guide later acknowledges that Jiras did, indeed, offer to sell the story to TV Guide but says the writer never expressed interest in

by a crazed gunman outside CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. Police involved are immediately contacted by Universal Studios about selling their rights. An indignant communications officer confirms the call to us, saying, "It is totally unethical."

❖ Irene Seale is sentenced in New Jersey Federal Court for her role in the kidnapping and murder of Exxon executive Sidney Reso. Prosecutor Michael Chertoff, the U.S. Attorney

COMMITMENT...AND MAN AGAINST NSTEIN SAYS

JANUARY 19 At *People* magazine, an operator gets a blind call from a producer searching for the writers of the Katie Beers story, which hasn't even been written yet. The writers refer the producer to their agent.

Sometimes producers get a lead on a story by developing "relationships" with journalists or tabloid-TV producers, and they can tie up a story before it even appears. Sometimes they buy the rights to a magazine story to supply the necessary plot line for a movie. *Always* they read *People*—the industry crib sheet.

Sighs one editor there, "Every Monday morning the phone rings with producers trying to find poor, beleaguered souls."

JANUARY 21 Attorney John Jiras hasn't secured legal custody of Katie for her mother yet, but he *has* started screening offers from producers.

"They've called me. I've contacted some," he tells us. "I'm sophisticated in this area. In 48 hours or so I expect something will happen. There's something imminent."

Pressed for details, Jiras cuts the conversation short: "Can I get paid? We're not looking for publicity. We've had enough publicity. The mother—they are on welfare. [They] don't need any headlines; she

REAL-LIFE HIGH CONCEPTS



Clockwise from top left: near *Fatal Attraction* victims; Lolita; the man who built the dungeon; the girl who lived there; the people in the snow; the boy who divorced his parents

paying for it.

JANUARY 25 *Variety* publishes a ranking of the made-for-TV movies broadcast from September 1, 1991, to August 31, 1992. Four of the top six are based on true stories. This does not, of course, include the three Amy Fisher movies; it's estimated that 91 million Americans saw at least part of one of those movies.

The same day,

❖ Two CIA employees are killed

for New Jersey, asks the judge to raise the fine, arguing that Ms. Seale is going to sell her story. The day the Seales were indicted, Chertoff got a call. "It was a guy, claims to be with Treat Williams asking about the rights to my story. I said, 'What? I'm a public official,'" Chertoff tells us, his voice rising. "The guy said, 'Oh'—like *he* was offended because I wouldn't talk to him."

❖ The *Times* runs a column on a dramatic, if somewhat confusing,

FISCAL ATTRACTION

THE REAL-LIFE TRUE STORY OF HOW WE BECAME
BIG-TIME TV PRODUCERS OVERNIGHT

BY LARRY DOYLE AND LOUIS THEROUX

THE DESIRE TO BECOME AN INDEPENDENT TELEVISION producer resides somewhere deep inside all of us. And so, when little Katie Beers, the plucky urchin whose plight had captured our hearts, emerged unharmed after 16 days from her living tomb, we, like the rest of America, wept and prayed. But we also thought, *My God—this is The Silence of the Lambs meets Curly Sue!*

We decided to go after the rights of "Big John" Esposito, the freelance Big Brother who had imprisoned the little girl for her own protection and then became a national hero by letting her go instead of killing her, according to his attorneys. We called said attorneys, Siben & Siben, the morning after Katie's release, posing as a representative of Dramaderry Productions, a nonexistent L.A.-based independent production company. We spoke to Sidney Siben, the firm's senior Siben.

Dramaderry: *Well, what do you think would be a good starting point for us?...*

Siben: Let me take it up with my client—as I say, he's being arraigned, and then if we can get him out on bail, I'll be able to talk to him....

So do you have any idea of a good starting figure?

Well, let's say \$25,000.

And that would be just for an option.

That's right. You would get an exclusive.

Siben's caginess made us wary. Suspecting we might be getting the run-around, we called back as the far-tonier-sounding Excalibur Pictures, represented by someone with an authentic British accent.

Siben: Here's what I suggest....Send me a fax. Tell me who you are, and I'll be glad to give you an option....

Excalibur: *Do you think we'll have much competition?*

I've received only one call, and I told them, 'Fax me'...and I haven't got a fax. You know, we get a lot of cranks calling, so that's why I want to see a fax.

Of course. I understand that completely.

As new details of Katie's ordeal emerged—her being chained by the neck, and the fact that Big John had stared at her while she urinated—we began to worry about whether this was the sort of story any network, or even Fox, would touch. Siben put our fears to rest.

This isn't going to get really ugly, is it?

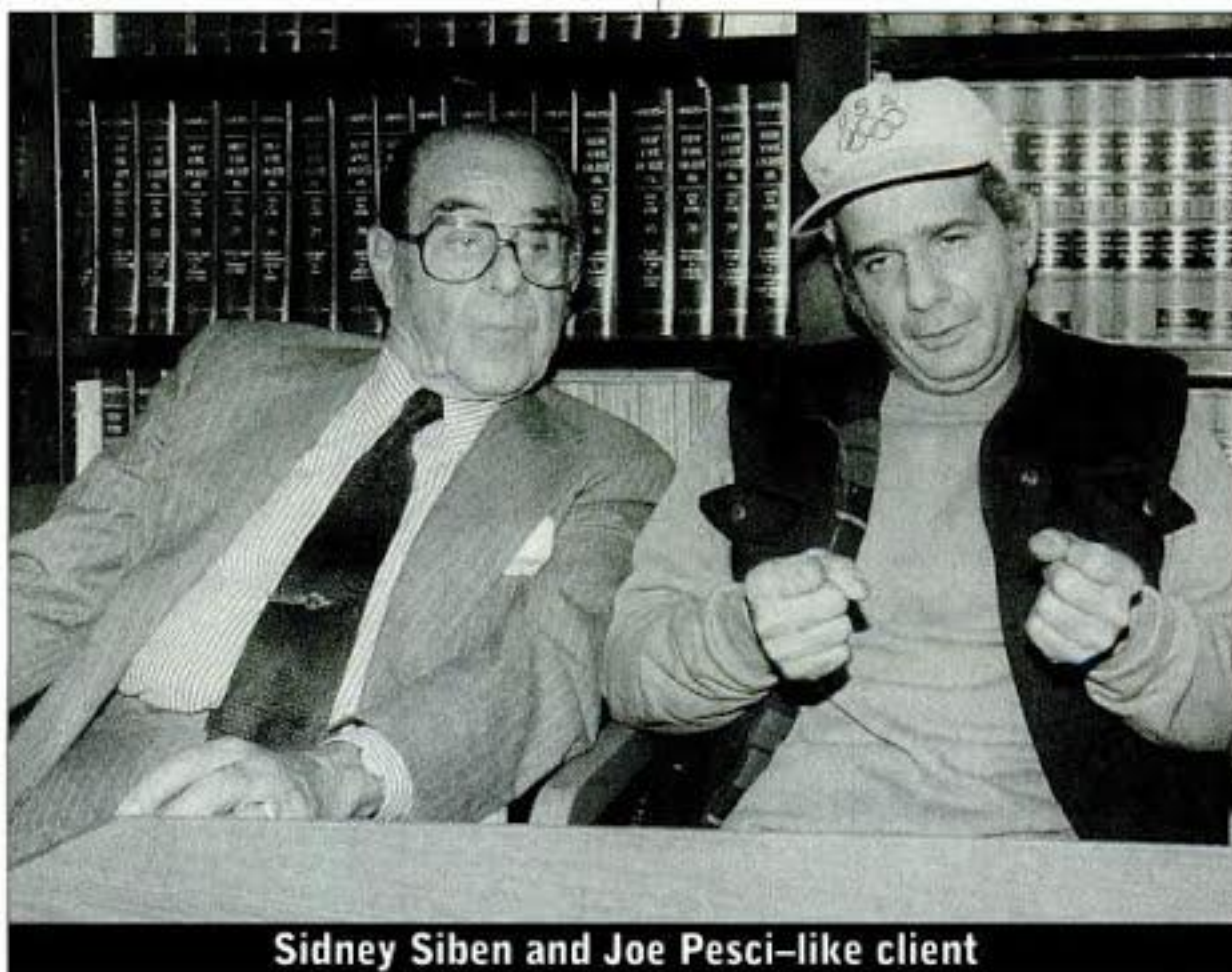
Siben: When you say ugly, the whole thing is ugly, but you know, apparently, that's what sells....

Well, what I'm asking is, I realize that it's already sort of ugly, but is it going to get much uglier than what we've already seen?

I don't think so, unless other children show up—it's quite possible right now....There might be other people coming out of the woodwork. But right at this moment...he denies everything—boys and girls....

Okay. Well, I'll get back to you.

You better fax me. I want to know who I'm dealing with...make sure I'm dealing



Sidney Siben and Joe Pesci-like client

with legitimate people.

Deciding Siben & Siben was serious about this fax business, we sent two faxes [opposite].

Siben: I got your fax. We're going to see [Esposito] on Monday....I'd tell yourself you got yourself a deal.

Dramaderry: *Well, we haven't really made an offer yet, because I still have some questions as to—*

What are your questions? Maybe I can answer them....

Would Mr. Esposito insist on any control over anything we did?

He's going to go to jail, so it's my opinion he's not in a position....As I see it, this would go toward paying his bail money, if we get the bail reduced, or his legal fee....

Would he be able to give us technical assistance in re-creating the "environment" that he created?

If he can do it from behind bars....

We usually ask anyone we talk to whether they have any ideas with respect to casting....

That's your business. This guy's a meek little fellow; he reminds me a lot of this Joe Pesci—he's not that bright....
We thought we might go another way...like a Willem Dafoe type.
Right.

Would he be offended if we went for sort of a more—
I don't think he has anything to say about it....

Well, what sort of story do you see this as? Do you see it as a sad story, or—

It is a sad story. It's a story about a man, never married, who loves children, he's attracted to kids, he may have a bit of a pedophilia problem. He never harmed anybody, really....The girl could have gone out any time she wanted. She didn't want to go home—her mother was a real pig. And then, apparently, the godmother that brought her up since she was about two or three months old, her husband, who's our client also, is charged with fooling around with her. He denies it, and we're representing him....There's a lot of weird things that I'm telling you.

So there's a lot of dramatic potential—
Absolutely....

What I'm wondering is whether you can negotiate for any ancillary rights in addition to the dramatic story.

I would have that, right.

So if we wanted to do a comic book that came out with the movie, that would be all right?

Yeah....

Over the weekend, *News 4 New York* did a story about all the agents and producers who were "clamoring" for Big John's story. "I called up some people that I know and they told me the prices were fantastic," Siben told WNBC's Mike Morris. *The New York Times* also reported that Siben had been "besieged by TV and movie agents from across the country and as far away as Europe." Concerned that we might be getting priced out of the competition, we called first thing Monday morning; we were referred to Andrew, Siben's son and partner. He has not inherited his father's schmooze genes.

Excalibur: *Does it seem as though there's going to be a lot of competition for the rights?*

Andrew Siben: That's right.

How many people are interested?

[Between] 50 and 100.

So there's going to be some competitive bidding.

That's correct.

What kind of figure do you...I mean, has it gone up from \$20,000?

Might go up to half a million dollars, I don't know.

We finally got through to the senior Siben in the early evening. He sounded hoarse but was more encouraging.

Dramaderry: *I saw you on the news on Saturday. You said that*

there were dozens of other people involved.

Siben: I got calls—that's one reason I lost my voice—from Florida, from California, from London. Half of them—they must be promoters, I said send me a fax and let me know who you are. About 15 of them I never heard from....But I've got your paper right on my desk here. And as I say, you're legitimate. Half of these others, I think they're phonies trying to get in on the act.

Has Esposito said whether he is going to be willing to participate in something like this?

As of yesterday, when we saw him, he was in no mood—poor guy, he's plenty worried, you know....They're looking for missing boys around there. But if they don't find any bodies or any bones, then they can't accuse him. If they get blood, human blood, how can they prove who it belongs to unless you get the body?...

On Wednesday there was some good news and some bad news. The good news was that Esposito was indicted on eleven counts, including first-degree kidnapping and sexual abuse, and his bail was set at \$1.1 million, making him and his attorneys more motivated sellers.

Excalibur: *I was talking to London this morning, and there were a couple of things they wanted me to get out of the way.*

Siben: What is that?

Whether there'd be a problem if an English actor played John.

Well, it's premature. Let's get [him] out of the can so we can talk to you.

They're talking to Terence Stamp over there....

There's nothing I can give you right now.

The other idea they're talking about is actually setting it 200 years ago and putting it in Victorian costume. I wondered if you'd have a problem with that....

Look, leave it this way: I can't do a thing now....I'm going to see him again tomorrow. He may be a little calmer. He was very

upset today.

The bad news was that John Esposito had gone mad.

Siben: He is in very bad shape. He's not even thinking right....I told him about you, but his mind's miles away.

So he's in no mood to talk business.

No, not today....

It doesn't sound good, though, does it?

It does not sound good right now. If he cracks up...he's going to wind up in an insane asylum.

Been done, we thought. We decided to put the project on hold, pending further developments like, say, if he escaped or something....



murder trial in upstate New York. Leftist lawyers William Kunstler and Ronald Kuby are defending a successful businessman accused (and since convicted) of murdering a doctor in a heated battle over rare, expensive baseball cards. The victim was found with unexplained—and unclaimed—sperm in his throat. Kuby calls it the Dr. Sperm in Throat trial. Adding to the drama, Kunstler had accused the businessman's teenage son of committing the crime on the witness stand, highly unusual these days, outside of *L.A. Law*. "You know whose sperm was in his mouth," Kunstler had bel-lowed, melodramatically. "It was yours!" Great story, great dialogue, but apparently no one's interested.

"It lacks the kind of sex Americans like," speculates Kuby. "It's homosexual. People are more interested in young, winsome girls."

JANUARY 26 St. Martin's Press issues a news release: "Maria Eftimiades, a correspondent at the New York bureau of *People* magazine and author of the best-selling book on the Amy Fisher case, *Lethal Lolita*—the basis for the NBC smash hit TV movie, *Amy Fisher: My Story*, has joined forces with Joe Treen, a senior editor at *People*...to recreate the heart-rending story of little Katie Beers." The publication date is May 1, just three months hence, but the expectation is that the TV rights will be sold long before then.

"There's a lot of interest," says Jane Dystel, their agent. "But I think whoever buys it will want Katie's rights too."

Others disagree. "The book is written from the public domain, and our fear is that [the movie] is about to happen without Katie," says Matthew Rosenblum from Naiburg's office. "Once rights to the book are sold, it's bye-bye Katie. It's just terrible."

JANUARY 29 Still recuperating at the Washoe Medical Center in Reno, the Stolpas—the people in the

snow—are interviewing producers. Braunstein and his boss, Michael Jaffe, are there. "Please," Jaffe says when we ask what makes the Stolpas so compelling. "It's a heroic story about commitment."

There are alternative promotable aspects as well. "It was during Christmas week—the manger metaphor *works!*" says Don Massey, yet another independent true-crime-TV-movie producer.

By the time the Stolpas were

FEBRUARY 1 *People* hits the stands with an exclusive on the Stolpas. One of the writers, Pam Lambert, tells SPY there were ground rules for her interview: "The agent cautioned the family against telling too much." Apparently "once thoughts are quoted, there is nothing to sell."

That morning, former New York Supreme Court chief judge Sol Wachtler is indicted on federal charges for extortion against his former lover and her 14-year-old

"PLEASE," JAFFE TELLS STORY ABOUT COMMIT

taken to Washoe in early January, the hospital communications office had been flooded with calls from reporters, agents and producers. Jim Stolpa's stepfather, who happens to be in the sports-television business, contacted a New York agent to help weed through some 70 inquiries.

The agent, Michael Glantz of Athletes & Artists, promptly sent out a fax to prospective bidders, offering an option for around \$100,000 and a floor for the rights of \$300,000. Glantz, new to the rights-purchase game, thinks it's a racket. Fees, he says, have been kept below market value by agents working for big agencies. "Agents say to the rights holders, 'We'll represent you for free,' but they are really representing their other clients—producers and directors," he says.

Braunstein is intent on assuring the Stolpas otherwise, that he's working for them and "won't bastardize" their story. Newly married and extremely personable, the 31-year-old Braunstein is Jaffe's "point guy." "He's serious, intense, convincing, a caring person," Jaffe says. "People trust him—as they should."

Braunstein warms to the Stolpas during their meeting, finding them intelligent and savvy. "They wanted to know our vision," he says.

daughter. "It's a good story," says Gloria Morrison, who'd tried to get the rights. Wachtler had no interest in selling, and neither did the victim. A movie is in the works nonetheless. Diane Sokolow bought the rights to a *New Yorker* piece written by former *Times* reporter Lucinda Franks, wife of Manhattan D.A. Robert Morgenthau; TriStar reportedly paid around \$200,000.

FEBRUARY 2 Contenders for the Stolpa saga have been winnowed to five. The big players—TriStar, Lorimar, Citadel and Warner Bros.—are out. The people in the snow have gotten too expensive.

Citadel's Ginsburg cannot figure it out. These sorts of rights have *always* gone for \$100,000 to \$200,000, and the bidding on this has gone beyond \$500,000. TV movies are a fixed-revenue enterprise, Ginsburg explains, "like the herring business." The networks pay a fixed sum to producers, between \$2.5 and \$3 million, so there's no chance for a surprise hit like a low-budget *Crying Game* to find an audience and make a windfall. "There is always someone who will pay anything," Ginsburg says. "They'll lose money. Or make no money—or almost no money." About this disturbing

new trend, he adds, "It's god-awful."

FEBRUARY 3 The Katie Beers story isn't moving. The state has appointed an official Katie surrogate, who has appointed a lawyer, Donald Novick, to make a sale. Novick is not worried: "There's a lot of interest in the child's part of the story."

Is Katie a movie? Some network executives are queasy about all the gritty true-life crime material but might still go for it. "They will

to make up scenes, did it bother to buy the rights to the Buttafuocos' true story at all? That question answers itself. A TV writer alchemizing the Buttafuoco true story into a movie *needs* creative license, to keep the narrative moving and perk it up a bit, particularly since the Buttafuoco version, unlike the other versions, does not include Joey having sex with Amy. Thus the existence of scenes like the one in which Joey verbally tantalizes Amy while dis-

peared in any movie based on the public record. Network Standards and Practices gnomes "go through every line of the script line by line," says one agent in the true-life genre. "Everything has to be sourced."

That doesn't mean that such an exchange actually occurred, though—only that the Buttafuocos had given CBS the right to their life story, *including the right to invent conversations or scenes for dramatic purposes*. Owning the "true-life

US IMPATIENTLY. "THIS IS A HEROIC MENT."

have an honest level of repugnance in some stories," says Hearst producer Donald Wrye, "but if they see a stampede, they'll have to do the same thing."

Wrye hedges on his own level of interest: "I'm not familiar enough with Katie Beers. My development person is talking to them. If she is interested, we need a special angle, not just the sheer fact of atrocity. The merit is the nature of human struggle and its various planes."

FEBRUARY 4 *Donahue* reruns one of its highest-rated shows ever, the broadcast in which Joey Buttafuoco was either confronted or ambushed, depending on whom you believe. Buttafuoco seems genuinely surprised when one audience member suggests Amy "shot the wrong Buttafuoco, and she aimed too high." "Explain to me how," another says, "you can get up here and play a very calculated and coached babe-in-the-woods routine when 20 minutes ago we saw a scene from a movie that you endorsed showing you verbally tantalizing Amy Fisher." After the crowd stops chanting "*Jo-ey, Jo-ey*," Buttafuoco admits disingenuously, "CBS took a little bit of creative license with the movie."

But why, if CBS was just going

cussing an auto-body-shop T-shirt:

Amy: I want to be wearing your shirt on my body.

Joey: Might be a little big on you.

Amy: I can handle your size.

Joey: You can handle extra-large? Huh?

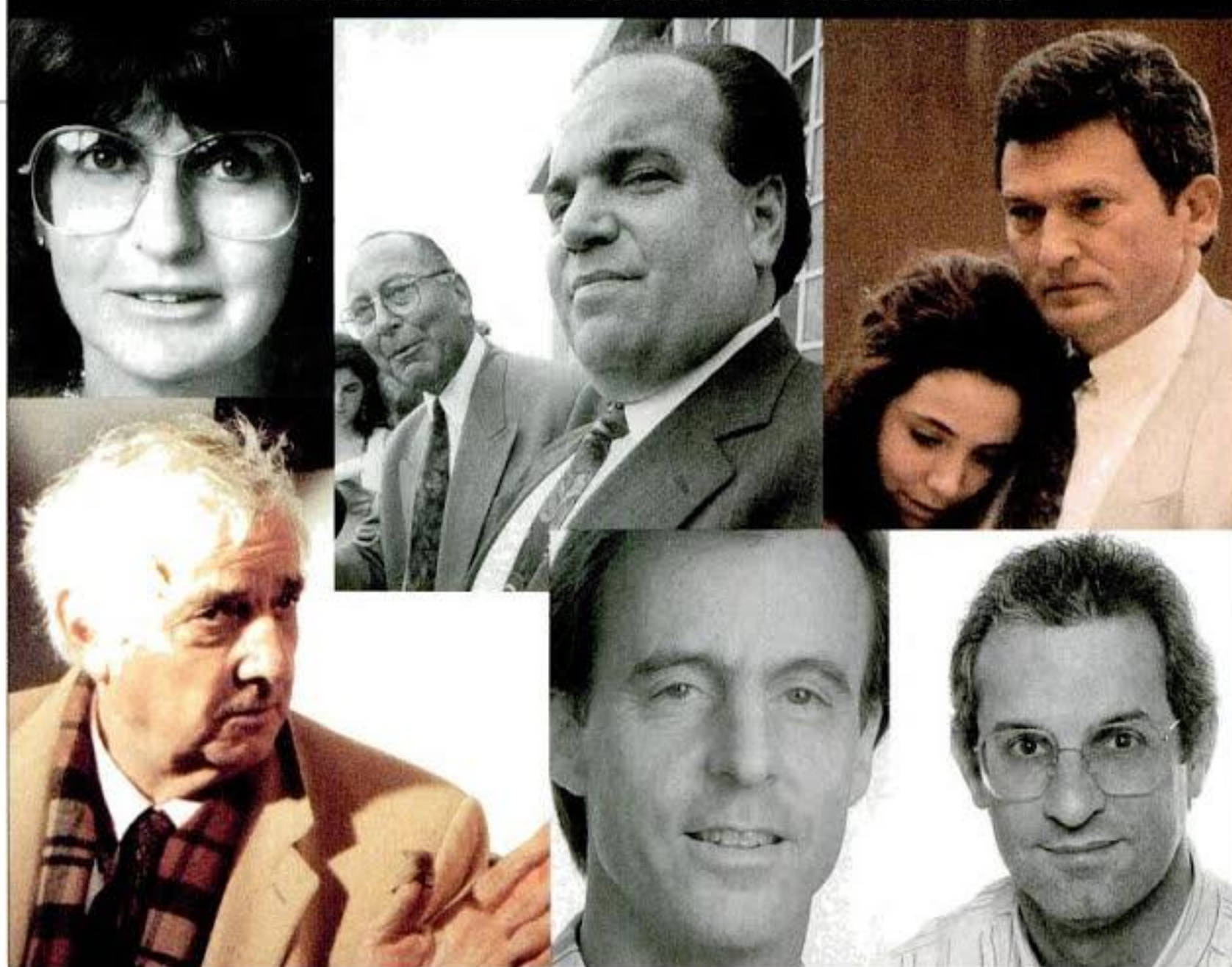
Amy: I can handle anything you give me.

Since this conversation was never recorded or videotaped by one of Amy's friends, it could not have ap-

peared in any movie based on the public record. Network Standards and Practices gnomes "go through every line of the script line by line," says one agent in the true-life genre. "Everything has to be sourced."

FEBRUARY 5 STATE MAY BE FORCED TO LET CROOKS CASH IN, bleats the *New York Post*, fretting over the Crime Victims Board's plans to return money seized under the old Son of Sam law. The board has no choice. In 1991 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that preventing criminals from making profitable book and movie deals

REAL-LIFE HIGH-CONCEPT PACKAGERS



Clockwise from top left: Sokolow; Kornberg with Mary Jo's civil lawyer, Michael Rindenow; Naiburg and Lolita; Ginsburg; Jaffe; Jiras

violated their First Amendment rights. Among those now waiting for the state to cut them a check: Henry (*Wiseguy*) Hill and John (*Dog Day Afternoon*) Wojtowicz.

Typically, the law is just catching up with the lawyers. Buying the rights of "perps" is already a standard, if unsavory, practice [see "*Fiscal Attraction*," page 44]. Eric Naiburg, acting in concert with Ron Yatter, was the trailblazer. Yatter and his Producer's Agency acted as an intermediary between Naiburg and KLM Productions in the Amy Fisher case by finding a bail bondsman and working out a co-production deal with Michael Jaffe Films. (Yatter also called *Rolling Stone* and offered them exclusive magazine rights to the Fisher story for \$75,000. The magazine passed.)

The bail-bondsman twist is a Yatter specialty. He recently secured the option to the story of a deaf woman who may or may not have helped her son murder her abusive husband. "Marlee Matlin has expressed interest," says Yatter, who is agenting the deal on an altruistic basis. "She was in jail for 20 months. We arranged her bail." The first thing she did, Yatter says, was go see her children.

Yatter is also busy shopping around the rights to Daisy Hutson, the Queens woman who killed her crack-addicted daughter. The tabloids and the state were sympathetic, and Hutson was given probation. Yatter optioned the rights. "She was pushed to the edge," he says. "She lived through eight years of hell. It's a story of life intensified, pushed to the extreme. [Hutson] worked all her life, and her daughter was ruined by drugs."

Hutson pitches her own story, Yatter says. Visiting one potential buyer, Hutson brought in an antique powder-loader from the Civil War that she happened to own. Holding it in one hand, she said, "This freed the slaves." In the other, Hutson had a crack vial. "This is enslaving us," she said.

"Pretty heavy!" Yatter says. "Top black actresses are interested. Call me next week."

Not all perps are lucky enough to have Yatter in their corner. Arthur Seale, the estranged husband of Irene and killer of Reso, has been trying unsuccessfully to sell his story for months, despite retaining an agent at the Sterling Lord agency in New York.

Last summer Seale pitched his story from behind bars. Sitting in the

body parts as a result of their ordeal, but "they're 21 years old, and they are seeing this kind of money. It's great. It's great."

FEBRUARY 7 At 9:00 p.m., *Firestorm: 72 Hours in Oakland*, another wholesale tragedy packaged by Gloria Morrison, airs on ABC. It gets creamed, coming in fourth, behind a *Laugh-In* reunion and *Married... With Children*. Still, Morrison sighs, "it was an honor to be on

"IT'S A STORY OF LIFE INT YATTER SAYS. "PRETTY

dirty visiting room, his eyes occasionally welling with tears, Seale crafted a dramatic plot line for potential but skeptical writers Richard Pienick, a former New York *Daily News* reporter, and Charles Sennott, a current *Daily News* reporter and author of a book about Father Ritter, the Covenant House priest-cum-perv. Seale argued that his story would make a hot book, that it had screen potential, that there were things that hadn't been made public. While court testimony seemed to show that Reso was dead when Seale opened the coffinlike box he had imprisoned him in, Seale was now contending that Reso was still alive when he opened the box. In vain, Seale tried to resuscitate his victim. It was too late: "He died in my arms."

Nice pietà scene; still, no interest.

FEBRUARY 6 The people in the snow must have liked Jaffe's vision—either that or the mind-boggling \$650,000 he agreed to pay them for the rights to their story, according to SPY sources.

"He's just a rights-getting guy," muttered one producer when told Jaffe had bought the latest hot story.

Yet Jaffe's man Braunstein finds a certain gratification in this line of work. Maybe the Stolpas lost some

during sweeps week."

FEBRUARY 8 Turner Home Entertainment announces that *Lethal Lolita—Amy Fisher: My Story* will become available on videocassette on April 2, with seven "sizzling" minutes added for home-viewing enjoyment. Perhaps Jaffe will make a nice profit after all.

At 9:00 p.m. the first of two versions of the story of Gregory K, the Florida boy who went to court and "divorced" his natural mother in order to be adopted by his foster parents, airs. Jaffe reportedly offered to pay \$320,000 for the rights, then there was a falling-out between the parties. Jaffe went ahead with his own "unauthorized" Gregory K movie, buying the entire trial on tape from Court TV. He beat the competition to the air.

"I'm not happy about it," said Orlando lawyer Greg Galloway, who represents Gregory K, now known as Shawn. "If you buy rights, you are free from suit from the person," said Galloway, who planned to watch the show very carefully.

Galloway is one of the few. Gregory K loses its time period for the night, a fact later pointed out by several producers. "That was a big manhunt," says one. "It was a flop."

FEBRUARY 9 At 9:00 p.m., *I Can Make You Love Me: The Stalking of Laura Black* airs on CBS. Producer Leonard Hill, long attracted to the story about obsessive love and mass murder in Silicon Valley, spent several years trying to buy Black's rights. "It took her some time to decide to let me do a movie"—and that's without even knowing Brooke Shields would be playing her.

FEBRUARY 10 Ron Yatter hasn't lost

FEBRUARY 13 For now, at least, Katie Beers is no Amy Fisher. A month after the story broke, word starts filtering out through the web of agents and producers that only one network, reportedly CBS, is now interested. Katie's state-appointed lawyer thinks any sale won't happen until March.

Interest is waning. One of the agents who earlier expressed interest in it calls it "tough." He is convinced there is no angle. "As time

numbers away either. "At this point I'm still involved in the investigation, and there is a lot of work to do," he says. "I've haven't thought about it—at this time." Drew Biondo, a spokesman for the D.A.'s office, says the prosecutors involved are not selling their stories. "I don't think they would be interested," he says. "At this point."

Despite their pro bono offer, Amy Fisher's lawyers, Naiburg and Rosenblum, seem to have been shut

ENSIFIED, PUSHED TO THE EXTREME," HEAVY!"

interest in Katie Beers, but now production is starting on his KLM movie, *The Arlette Schweitzer Story*, about the South Dakota woman who bore her own granddaughter for her infertile daughter. Yatter flew an associate to Aberdeen to meet Schweitzer in a hotel room and nail the rights. But it wasn't just the money: "She liked our approach on various things—the medical and the human interest."

Unbeknownst to Yatter, his other big client, Daisy Hutson, is having second thoughts about selling her life story for a made-for-TV movie, according to her attorney, Edward Zaloba. She is only interested if there is a strong antidrug message. She "thought Amy Fisher was crap," he says.

FEBRUARY 11 Marilyn Beers's makeover (new, softer hairdo, removal of garbage and empty beer cans from her home) is not immediately convincing; Katie's custody hearing is adjourned for several weeks. This is the worst thing that can happen. "There is some confusion as to who has the rights to the rights," laments agent Jane Dystel, who has yet to sell the rights to Eftimiades and Treen's little-Katie book to television.




Clockwise from top left: Brooke Shields is the stalked woman; near *Fatal Attraction*, on *Donahue*; Drew Barrymore is the Lethal Lolita; the girl in the dungeon's extended family, on *Donahue*. **Center:** Joseph Gordon-Levitt is the parent-divorcing boy.

moves on, people go to another story," says Yatter, who nevertheless says he remains interested.

Producers say it is Katie's own story and rights or nothing. Still, there are feelers out. Lt. Dominick Varrone, an investigator assigned to the case, has a pile of phone messages on his desk from producers and directors. He hasn't returned the calls, but he hasn't thrown the

out of the Katie action completely. Still, there is a bright side. The firm has been besieged with letters from criminals and other characters hawking their own life stories. "Everyone is admitting to unsolved murders," says Rosenblum. "Women who were raped want to know if we can do a movie together. We might go into the agent business. Put together movies." D



GLAMOUR- LUNCH HELL

For some inexplicable reason, the most important social arbiter in New York is an English, working-restaurant manager named Brian McNally—

he tells Si and Anna and Julian and Bobby who's up and who's down. But McNally is also New York's chicest deadbeat, and in his financial netherworld, you can always get a table.

by Deirdre Fanning

"Chris Blackwell has called me about doing something in Miami," says Brian McNally, typically dropping into just one sentence two megacool phenomena—Blackwell, the extremely wealthy founder of Island Records, and Miami, the town where models now swarm the beaches like ants on sugar. It's about three o'clock on a recent afternoon, and New York's restaurateur of the moment—in fact, New York's restaurateur of several moments since 1980—has just

class





THIS WAY, PLEASE McNally with some of his favorite customers—his wife, Anne, Anna Wintour, Bianca Jagger and Julian Schnabel

finished presiding over the city's glossiest status scene: lunchtime at 44, the restaurant of the Royalton Hotel, at 44 West 44th Street. Wrestling with his own late meal, a shrimp dish that has arrived on its plate displayed in an alarmingly vertical arrangement, McNally sits in one of the four semicircular, retro acid-green banquettes along the wall of his restaurant, whose look also includes tasseled mirrors and exoskeletal chairs. "There's Tina just beside us," McNally says through a mouthful of food, tossing his head toward the booth that *New Yorker* editor Tina Brown had occupied that day. Later he adds, "You saw Calvin [Klein], of course? Oh, and Si [Newhouse] was here earlier—yes, the big man himself."

Ian Schrager, the Studio 54 cofounder and convicted felon who owns the Royalton, brought McNally in a year ago to revive the restaurant's flagging business, and since then 44 has become a kind of a baby-boomers' Four Seasons, a midday Stork Club, a meridian East Coast Mortons. Ancien régime ladies may eat lunch at Mortimer's, plutocrats and third wives may eat lunch at Le Cirque, but New York's glamour nexus—the fashion-publishing-gallery-socialite solar system that is Manhattan's version of Hollywood—eats lunch at 44.

From his command post behind the maître d's stand, the appropriately 44-year-old McNally greets and flatters his customers and, most important, strategizes over where to seat them. But it has been ever thus, or at least it has been ever thus since 1980, when McNally and his older brother Keith opened Odeon, an

establishment that so defined its era that it was pictured on the cover of *Bright Lights, Big City*. McNally went on to own each of the restaurants that successively represented the molten-hot center of fashionable New York: Indochine, then Canal Bar and finally—and most deliriously—150 Wooster, which closed in 1990 after two years as the Anna-and-Tina-and-Abe-and-Shirley-plus-Madonna-and-the-beautiful-people-trust-fund clubhouse.

And why have they come? Not for the food (although 44 is by far the best McNally restaurant culinarily), and not for the decor, but rather because of McNally's own deeply ingratiating charm and laser-guided snobbery. Catskills resorts always had a *tumbler*, the hyperactive, gabbling social director who kept everyone on the go and busy and amused, and for ten years or more Brian McNally has been the *tumbler* of café society, a *tumbler* granted the power of cruel arbiter of status—Jerry Lewis plus Mrs. Astor, as performed by Dudley Moore. This has not been his greatest achievement, however: McNally's greatest achievement has been to flatter and soothe and butter up his fabulous friends—and to squander their money at the same time.

ACCORDING TO RECORDS SPY UNEARTHED IN THE NEW YORK County Clerk's Office, McNally currently owes some \$1.2-million to various creditors in 13 judgments and tax warrants; that \$1.2 million doesn't include hundreds of thousands of dollars he owes in overdue personal loans from friends who never sued. In these and other lawsuits that have been settled out of court, McNally has been charged with everything from incompetence and mismanagement to misrepresentation, fraud and even stealing.

His debts cut across all class lines: You wouldn't think that Prince Michael of Greece and the Scott/Bavosa Construction Company would have much in common, but both are waiting for McNally to repay them. The New York State Tax Authority would also welcome a valid check with Brian McNally's signature. Even the health club in lower Manhattan where McNally used to work out is owed money. "He and his wife, Anne, are banned from the club," says a spokesperson for Profitness Inc. "We've written them off as a bad debt." (McNally says he paid the club in advance.)

The list goes on and on. Years ago, a would-be partner raised \$250,000, expecting McNally to start another downtown restaurant. Nothing much happened, and, typically, the financier had to sue to get the money back. McNally's Village townhouse has faced regular foreclosure actions from several banks, escaping most recently in January when Anne, McNally's wife, reportedly paid \$200,000 to stave off Bank Leumi. (Anne is reputed to be an heiress, but no one seems able to say what she is heir to or if she really has much money. "They fly coach," says a friend.) McNally doesn't own a car—he stopped being able to afford payments on his Jaguar months ago.

"How does a man with a record like his keep rising out of the ashes and moving on to new things?" asked a lawyer recently who has represented McNally investors in the past. We wondered about this, too. We also wondered how McNally manages to keep his friends even as he enrages

“I mean, Brian McNally, he was doing you a favor letting you into his restaurant!” says one McNally investor

them. In conducting more than 30 interviews for this story, SPY heard from pissed-off friends of McNally's who ripped into him for hours and gave us the names of other pissed-off friends, but in public all these people still act as if they really are his friends. We learned that McNally has survived because he has always had something to offer that's even more important to a certain kind of New Yorker than loyalty or pride or money: a good table.

BRIAN MCNALLY WAS BORN IN LONDON'S EAST END; HIS FATHER was a longshoreman. He left England in his teens to travel around the world before heading to the States in 1976 to join his older brother Keith, who was a waiter at the Greenwich Village restaurant One Fifth. McNally worked there, and later as a bartender at Mr. Chow's, Andy Warhol's favorite restaurant, and eventually found a job running errands for art patroness Christophe de Menil. It was during this time that he met and befriended the circle of artists—Julian Schnabel, David Salle, Brice Marden, Brian Hunt—some of whom would, when they suddenly got rich in the 1980s, become his hapless investors.

“I remember walking with Brian two or three days after I had first met him,” says one artist friend from the period. “And he was telling me these wonderful stories about working in Australia and how wild the place was then. He said he had worked at a mining company there and one Friday night he sneaked into the payroll department and stole \$32,000. He said he took off for Thailand the next day.” McNally denies telling this story, and says it isn't true, but admits that he may have told about *others* in the Australian mining company who stole cash. However, two investors say they remember hearing the story the first way from him, *before* they gave him their checks. *Bri, you old dog! So how much money do you want?*

By 1980 the McNally brothers had decided they'd learned enough about the restaurant business to start their own place. They opened Odeon, on West Broadway, that year with money raised mostly from family members and in-laws. The place was conceived as a hip late-night brasserie with contemporary food served by gorgeous waitpeople, and from the very beginning it was packed with an intensely chic downtown crowd. Having split with Keith in an acrimonious feud, McNally struck out on his own with Indochine in 1984, which was followed by Jerry's, Undochine (a late-night club located below Indochine), Canal Bar and 150 Wooster. He had little trouble raising the capital for these places, for by now McNally had recognized the lure of restaurants in New York's social scene. “Everybody wanted to be recognized and everybody wanted to be treated like a celebrity in a restaurant, so they bought into one,” says Bruce Mailman, a McNally friend and fellow creator of hip restaurants.

McNally's fundraising techniques were casual—one didn't want to look too desperate—but persistent and persuasive. “I remember him calling me one afternoon about investing in Undochine,” says one investor. “He said, ‘Wouldn't it be wonderful to have some money from something like this to buy art or other beautiful things with?’ And it was fun to go to his

restaurants, to see all the people you knew.” Another investor says, “I remember thinking he was doing me an enormous favor by asking me to invest with him in Indochine.” Adds Seymour Israel, a plainspoken Connecticut lawyer who was an investor in 150 Wooster and decidedly not a member of the McNally downtown *mise-en-scène*, “I'm a lawyer, and it was a little excitement in my life. And, I mean, Brian McNally, he was doing you a favor by letting you into his restaurant! He had such a big reputation—you couldn't believe you got in.”

It only helped matters, of course, that the son of a stevedore had become as prominent a celebrity as the very crowd to which he was catering. With his blond socialite wife, who had been introduced to him by his old friend Anna Wintour (who eventually made her a contributing editor at *Vogue*), McNally had acquired a Paris apartment on the elegant Place des Vosges and a rental house in East Hampton (Jann Wenner once bragged that his new house in East Hampton was just down the road from Brian and Anne McNally), as well as his townhouse. He palled around with Lorne Michaels and Bobby De Niro, with whom he has recently discussed...opening a restaurant. McNally even acted as a go-between when a very important art dealer wanted to sign a very important artist. He and Anne were the subject of a fawning *Vanity Fair* profile in 1989, a profile for which he very classily asked Helen Marden—Brice Marden's wife—to tell a reporter he was great in bed.

It was with Anne—quiet,



MAÎTRE D' AS CELEBRITY From left, *Vanity Fair*, *New York*, *HG* and *The New York Times*; McNally with cake for Grace Mirabella

enigmatic and almost universally described by acquaintances as “really involved in clothes shopping”—that McNally cultivated his most brilliant connection, to Prince Michael of Greece, a Paris-based member of the former Greek monarchy and the definitive eighties socialite. Prince Michael and his wife became best friends with Anne and Brian and regular fixtures at the various McNally *boîtes*. The prince even invested nearly \$350,000 in an ambitious—and moribund—plan for McNally to use his expertise and reputation to consult for other restaurants through his holding company, Whitechapel Inc.

Yes, McNally had become quite a nob, and it is poignant to hear Seymour Israel—a 150 Wooster investor—recall, “You had to apply for a seat at 150 Wooster. You’d make your reservation and then someone would call back later to tell you whether you’d made it in or not.”

McNally’s sensitivity to class distinctions rivals that of Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. One former employee remembers listening to a hostess complain about being berated by him over the kind of people she was letting into 150 Wooster. “He walked into the restaurant one day and started perusing the reservations book,” says this source. “He looked down the list of phone numbers next to the names and started frowning, and then in a disgusted voice in that British accent he said, ‘Excuse me, but wot are all these 201s, 914s, 516s and 718s doing here?’ The hostess said, ‘Those are the people who’ve booked for tonight.’ And he said, ‘Well, you can just call them

back and tell them we’re overbooked.’” A longtime cashier at 150 Wooster says that McNally would “yell at a *maître d’* if he thought she had seated some unattractive Middle American couple too close to a celebrity or too close to the door.”

Along with this disciplined resistance to plebes, it was McNally’s herculean unctuousness—and an accent that Americans thought was classy and glamorous simply by virtue of its Britishness—that brought the crowds back night after night. “Brian knows how to flatter people and be a bit of a waiter to them,” says one Indochine investor. He certainly does. McNally is funny and smart, but he’s also shockingly prepared to abase himself before you without the slightest provocation. He told this reporter at lunch that while running a restaurant might be one way to make a living, “it isn’t like being a journalist, you know, where you’re an artist who’s actually creating something.” In the end, it’s easy to see why people are so charmed by Brian McNally, and why so many closed their eyes to the risks of investing money with him. “I should have known about Brian; I had heard all the stories from other investors,” says Helen Marden, who put money into Undochine. “But he was my friend, and I really liked him. I miss him now, but I think he’s a sociopath.”

Despite all the glitter and bonhomie, there were signs that the business side of McNally’s enterprises was a tad unstable. It appears that management practices at the restaurants were completely anarchic, and that accountants and business managers came and went quickly. The cashier at 150 Wooster says that checks bounced constantly and that he had to pay the chefs directly out of the cash register. In 1990, Canal Bar was suddenly shut down, a victim among other things of the fickleness of its customers, who’d abandoned it for 150 Wooster. Investors in Indochine, who by now were making a small return on their initial investment, with hardly any explanation suddenly stopped getting money. Investors in Undochine lost practically all their money. One dealer felt so bad for an artist he represented who had put tens of thousands of dollars into the club that the dealer simply made up what the artist lost.

Meanwhile, according to one former Indochine employee, McNally would each night issue so-called monkey checks to two or three waitresses on the floor. These were tallied by hand rather than going through the register, and all cash from such checks was then put in a box.

Details, apparently, were not the McNally strong suit. Despite state-liquor-authority regulations requiring that all primary investors in a restaurant be listed on its liquor-license application, McNally’s applications were often deficient. Many investors’ names don’t appear on the applications for 150 Wooster and Undochine, for example—this is a misdemeanor. And in a move Prince Michael’s financial adviser, Philippe Manet, calls “a Saddam Hussein-like provocation,” McNally neglected to pay all payroll and sales taxes for Indochine; 150 Wooster also owes back taxes. Last February he lost his ownership in Indochine altogether when the state tax authority padlocked the restaurant for back taxes and sold its contents at auction. Indochine was bought by members of its Vietnamese staff at the auction and

“Brian was my friend, and I really liked him. But I think he’s a sociopath”

has since reopened under the same name. For a while afterward McNally stayed around greeting guests at their tables—acting as if he still owned the place, in other words.

It was in 1990, when 150 Wooster collapsed even as it was still packing them in, that investors really began to accuse McNally of misusing their money. In suits filed in federal court by 150 Wooster investors Seymour Israel, Andrew Penson, Sylvia Martins and Nessia Pope [Pope now works as a part-time photo editor for SPY], McNally was charged with, among other things, misrepresenting the likely costs of his restaurants when he signed investors up, misappropriating cash from 150 Wooster and using it to make loans and payments to his other enterprises, and misrepresenting the amounts of his own investments in Indochine and 150 Wooster.

“I’m not saying everybody who invests in something risky like a restaurant should make money,” complains a former 150 Wooster investor today. “But this place was packed every night. They were doing 150 to 200 dinners a night. They were obviously making money. Where was it all going?”

McNally insists the funds in each case went largely to unforeseen costs and points out that he settled the 150 Wooster lawsuits out of court. “I feel like Richard Nixon saying, ‘I am not a crook,’ ” he complains over lunch. “It’s embarrassing.” He does admit to having occasionally borrowed from one corporation to bail out another, but he says the money was always later repaid. He denies knowledge of any monkey checks and says he just never got around to updating the deficient liquor licenses for the restaurants.

A bit later, looking around 44’s dining room, McNally hisses, “Do you think I *want* to be here? I *hate this*.” It’s a comment he repeats several times during conversations about his business, and it seems genuine. “It was extremely difficult for me to stand at the doors of 44 in the beginning,” he snarls in a subsequent conversation. “It’s hard to get back into things after a flop. One big reason I’m still at it, bowing and scraping, is because of the debts. One’s reputation is important to one.” Such an explosive reaction—could it be that Brian McNally loathes the very people he so avidly courts? “He hates star-fuckers, he really just hates them,” says a former Indochine waitress. But after a moment’s reflection she adds, “Even though he is one.”

MCNALLY MAKES HIS ULTIMATE DEFENSE OF HIMSELF WHEN HE says, “You wouldn’t remain friends with people who have ripped you off, would you?”

But, evidently, you would. Amazingly, McNally’s friends have remained his friends, and there seem to be two reasons for this frighteningly irrational behavior. The first is that McNally’s friends don’t want to admit they were taken. “I got caught with my pants down,” says one socially prominent New Yorker who gave him money, “and I made a stupid mistake, and I don’t want my other partners to know that.” Another member of McNally’s crowd—who never invested with him—puts it more directly. “They feel like schmucks,” he says of McNally’s partners. On top of this, they hope that if they’re nice to McNally, maybe—just maybe—they’ll get their money back.

But another, much more intriguing reason why McNally’s friends remain McNally’s friends is the power he exercises over their social lives. One very successful New Yorker who has lost plenty of money dealing with McNally told SPY that if his name appeared anywhere in this article, he would break the reporter’s legs. When we asked a close friend of this man’s why he would care so much about what McNally thought of him, we were told he wouldn’t want to alienate McNally’s other friends and risk losing invitations to their parties. Apparently those other friends are thinking exactly the same thing. McNally himself has always played on these social insecurities by yelling at people who ask him for money and making them feel it is somehow gauche or grasping to press the matter. Of course, the fear of being on the out list is even more intense now that McNally is back on top again. He is really a more recent version of Studio 54’s Steve Rubell in the 1970s or the Stork Club’s Sherman Billingsley in the 1930s and ’40s, both of whom played an exalted role in New York solely because of the power they wielded at the door.

McNally’s negotiations with his patrons do not end once they are settled at Table 1, however. Let us recall that the real currency of all social intercourse in New York is U.S. currency. Another friend says that when McNally ran Indochine, he used to go through the cushions at the end of the night looking for change that had fallen out of customers’ pockets. At some point, he learned to go into their pockets directly. ☛

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YIKES! ARE WE THE NEXT

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA?

by Daniel Radosh and Timothy Long ★ Illustrations by Terry Allen

"Things fall apart," the poet said. "The center cannot hold." And while poets may or may not really be the unacknowledged legislators of the world, W. B. Yeats's observation certainly positions him as a skillful forecaster of world events. Because lately things—big things, like countries—have been falling apart at an alarming rate. Along with that of the Soviet Union, centers have in recent years failed to hold in both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, and further collapses seem imminent. At his

confirmation hearings in February, Secretary of State Warren Christopher commented, in prose, on "the surfacing of long-suppressed ethnic, religious and sectional conflicts" around the globe and warned that if this keeps up, "we'll have 5,000 countries rather than the 100-plus we have now."

All of which is leading some in the United States to wonder, *Could it happen here?* For just as Ukrainians and Serbs and Croats and Czechs and Slovaks have revised the map of Europe, many Americans have made detailed and conflicting plans to reconfigure *their* homeland. A siege, say, of Duluth, Minnesota, by ethnic Wisconsinians is not as improbable as you think.

For a long time the most commonly heard call for a transformed United States has involved the creation of a 51st state, and Washington, D.C., is, of course, currently the odds-on favorite to join the union fully. But there are other possibilities, even aside from chronic states manqués Puerto Rico and Guam. According to the magazine *Maclean's*, 25 percent of all Quebecers would accept if the U.S. offered their province statehood. *Two* separate movements favor colonizing and granting statehood to the moon. Drew Angel ran for president in 1988 and the California State Senate in 1992 on this platform. Charles R. Miller, founder of the Durham, California, American Space Council, more moderately suggests annexing only the satel-

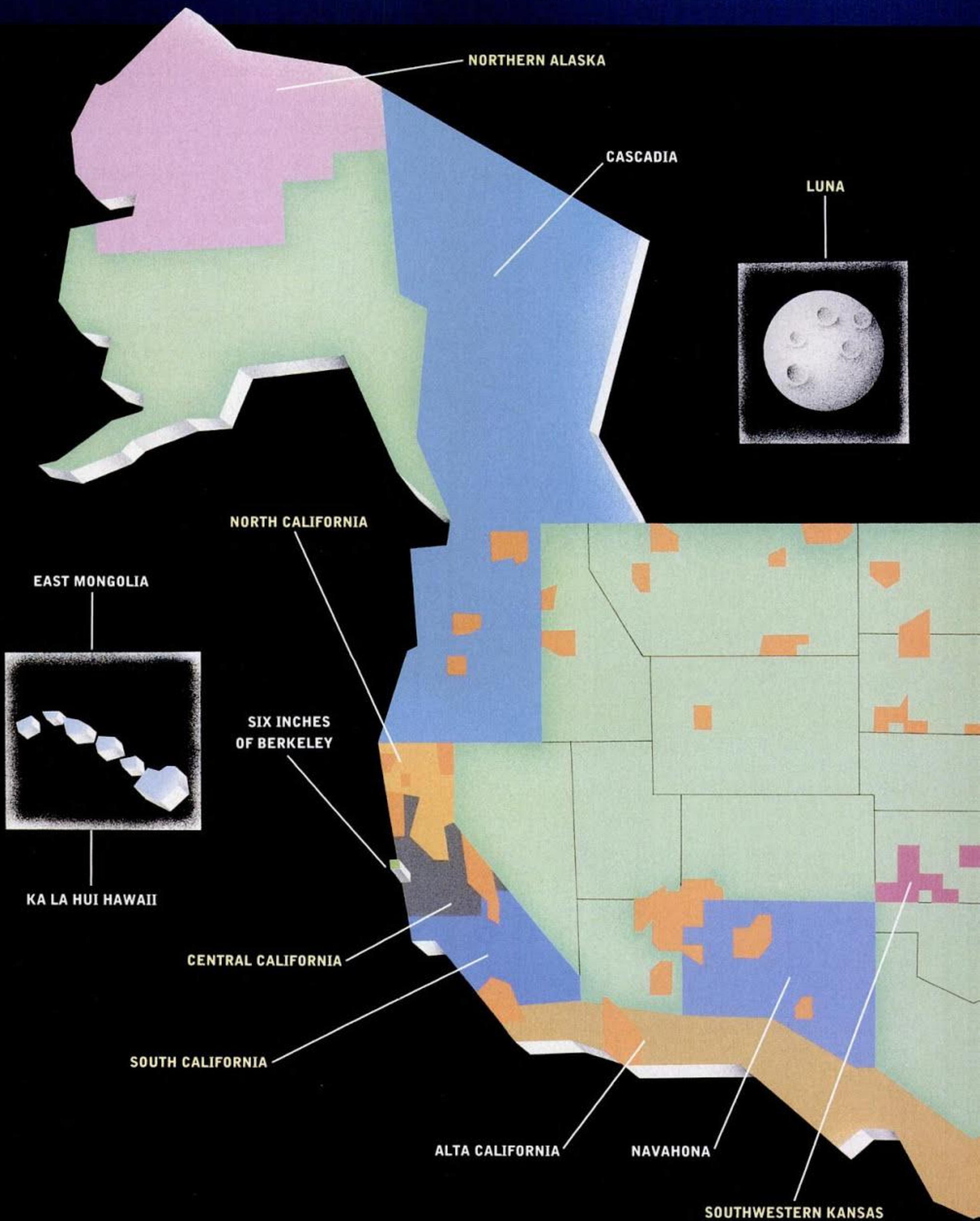
lite's northern hemisphere.

Rather than add new territory, however, the more passionate strategists for a new America would prefer to carve up the states we already have. This approach is gaining adherents every day, and there is often something just plain stirring about the American secessionist spirit. Consider the words of California state senator Stan Statham, who wants to rend his state in thirds: "For heaven's sake, if the *Russians* can take back their government in a dictatorship, can't *we* even reform ours in a *repub-lic*?" The Vermont state archive receives half a dozen calls every year from people seeking information about the "escape clause" in their state constitution, which Vermonters believe grants them the right to vote to secede from the U.S. According to archivist Gregory Sanford, Vermont secessionists "can't accept the fact that Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys and others would have participated in any sort of union that didn't allow Vermont an out." (In an in-

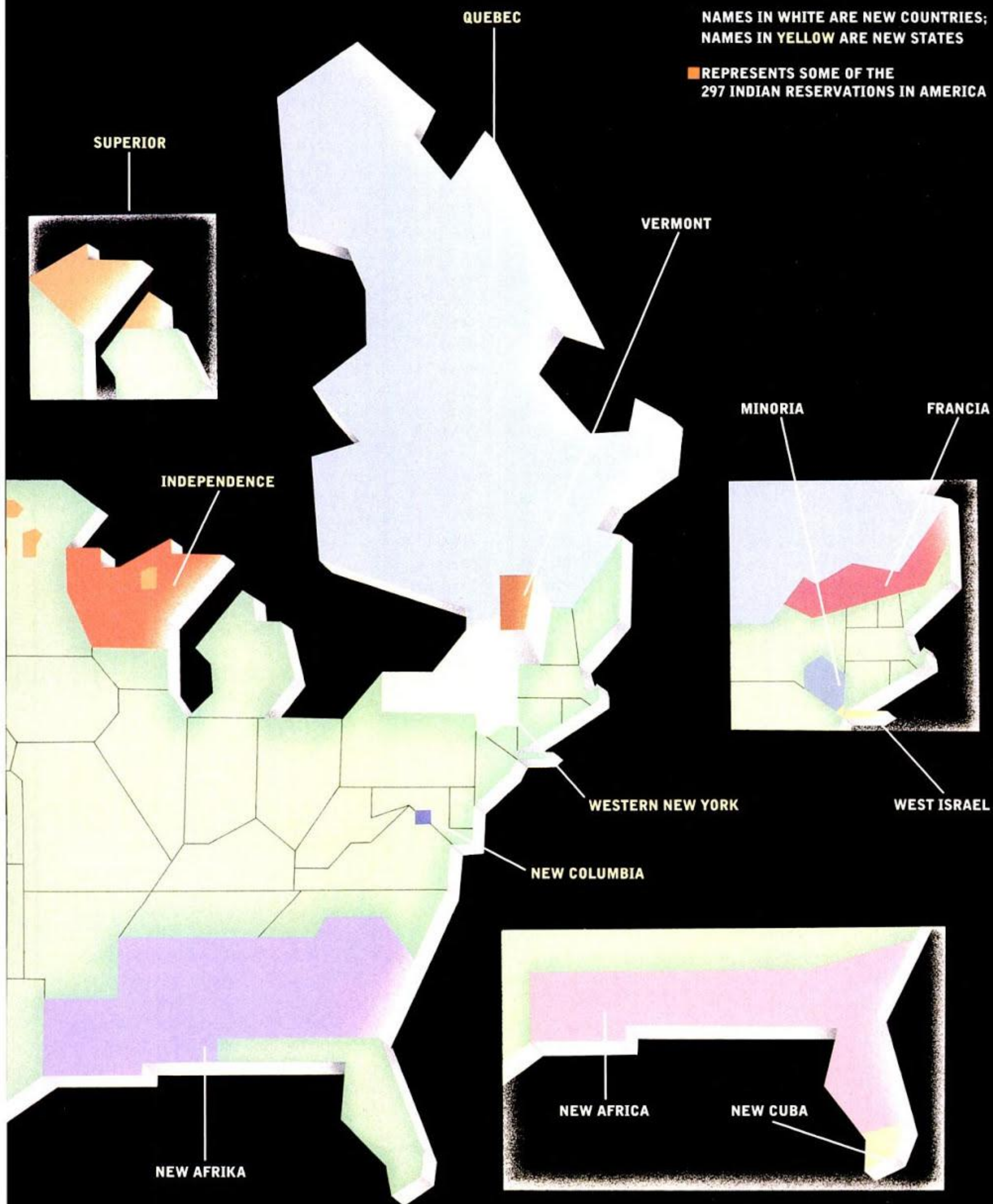
formal referendum in 1990, Vermont citizens backed secession from the U.S. 999-608.) In a similar historical vein, southwestern Kansas secessionist Don Con-cannon says his movement is "a midwestern version of the Boston Tea Party. Except we don't have an ocean." And then there's those wacky kids at the University of California at Berkeley, who, when not going to class



USA TOMORROW



SPY's map of the area destined to become known as The Former United States, displaying the actually proposed new states and independent nations described in the accompanying essay




naked last fall, marked a six-inch circle with a plaque that reads, THIS SOIL AND THE AIR SPACE ABOVE IT SHALL NOT BE PART OF ANY NATION AND SHALL NOT BE SUBJECT TO ANY ENTITY'S JURISDICTION. Farther north, citizens of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia have begun referring to their region with the romantic, sylvan name Cascadia. The new country's primary exports would be timber, salmon and garage bands.

Many of those who demand changes in the geographical makeup of the U.S. are not idealistic, however—they are simply sour and embittered. Eighty-four-year-old Clark Hughes of Hallie, Wisconsin, feels that northern Wisconsin is shackled by "antiquated laws" enacted by the legislature in Madison and should break off to become, along with Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the new state of—what else?—Independence. Karl Waldner of Boyne City, Michigan, who in the mid-1980s gathered 20,000 signatures in favor of creating a new state of Superior out of the Upper Peninsula and the northern tip of the Lower Peninsula, remarked at the time, "We've felt, but never have been able to prove, that we're being colossally shortchanged by the state government." Last June, 27 out of 31 northern California counties voted to secede from the rest of the state. But voters in San Francisco and San Mateo counties rejected the two-state model, which placed them in the same state as Los Angeles, so State Senator Stan Statham has since proposed a three-state model, which he calls "a win-win-win situation." And New York state senator Donald Davidsen calls for a Western New York, which would be the current state excluding New York City and its four closest suburban counties. "Maybe New York City," explains Davidsen, "has more in common with New Jersey."

INEVITABLY, AMERICAN SEPARATISM HAS ITS DARK SIDE. Like the former Yugoslavia, America is a country with ferocious ethnic and religious tensions, a country chronically obsessed with the question of the rights of minorities, a country with many Yugoslavians (497,000 people of Yugoslav heritage, according to the latest census). Not surprisingly, then, a good many of today's demands for border rearrangement arise from genuine, Bosnia-and-Herzegovina-style conflicts. Even the dullest observers of the American scene have not missed the similarities. For example, *The New York Times's* Abe Rosenthal has asked, "Does it seem farfetched to think that multiculturalism or racial separation or ethnic pluribus yes unum no could lead to the kind of divisions that blew apart Yugoslavia and blew up Bosnia?" The answer, surely, is *Hub?* Of course, dozens of semi-

autonomous ethnic states already exist throughout our country in the form of Indian reservations, and Laura Waterman Wittstock, the president of a Native American information service, says the Native American intelligentsia believes that "the Soviet Union breaking up and the emergence of ethnic issues" may carry over to "the so-called democratic countries." When the federal government recently announced a plan to cede 400,000 acres of public land in Arizona to the Hopi Indians, the magistrate who mediated the agreement felt it necessary to promise nervous Americans that "the Hopis are not going to erect a Berlin Wall to keep everyone out."

New ethnic entities are in the making, too. Inupiat Eskimos in Alaska want to break off and form a new state in which they will be the majority (and, coincidentally, control all of the current state's on-land oil resources). A burgeoning Native Hawaiian independence movement is demanding the entire state back. It *may* just be coincidence that the people in upstate New York who want to expel New York City and those in Michigan who want to break away from Detroit would be left with far, far whiter states. And then there's the National Association for the Advancement of White People, founded by David Duke, which wants to divide the United States into an array of eight ethnic and racial homelands called West Israel (consisting of Manhattan and Long Island), New Cuba, East Mongolia, Francia (for Franco-Americans), Minoria (for Puerto Ricans and Americans of Mediterranean ancestry), Navahona (for Native Americans), Alta California (for Mexican Americans) and New Africa. Conveniently, a black American group called the New Afrikan People's Organization proposes to establish a New Afrika with borders almost identical to those suggested by the white supremacists for *their* New Africa.

It is all too easy to dismiss plans for rearranging the American map as the ravings of geeks, nuts, malcontents and racists, though. Just remember that in 1849, Americans reacted with similar derision when a sparsely populated chunk of the North American hinterland humbly applied for statehood. The would-be state persisted for 47 years, formally applying for entry into the union five more times, until finally in 1896 the United States said, *Okay, you've earned it, you can join us.* Of course, Utah's eventual statehood probably had less to do with good old dogged stick-to-itiveness than with the Mormon church's abandonment of polygamy. The point still holds, though: In America, today's bizarre fantasy can become tomorrow's full-fledged, congressionally represented member of our federal system. After all, America's very first official state was Delaware, and no place is weirder than that. 

the times

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THE LYING NUN

IN WHICH WE PRETEND
TO BE A BRIDE OF CHRIST
A SPY PRANK

THE SLEEVES ARE tricky. They tend to dip into the toilet. And where are the pockets?

Nuns have to keep their Kleenex and feminine-hygiene supplies somewhere, don't they? And there's so much material in the skirt, or surplice, or cassock—or whatever it's called—that you can't take a step without cloth wadding up around your knees and tripping you.

"Stop adjusting yourself," a passerby scolded me. "You look as though you're wearing a costume."

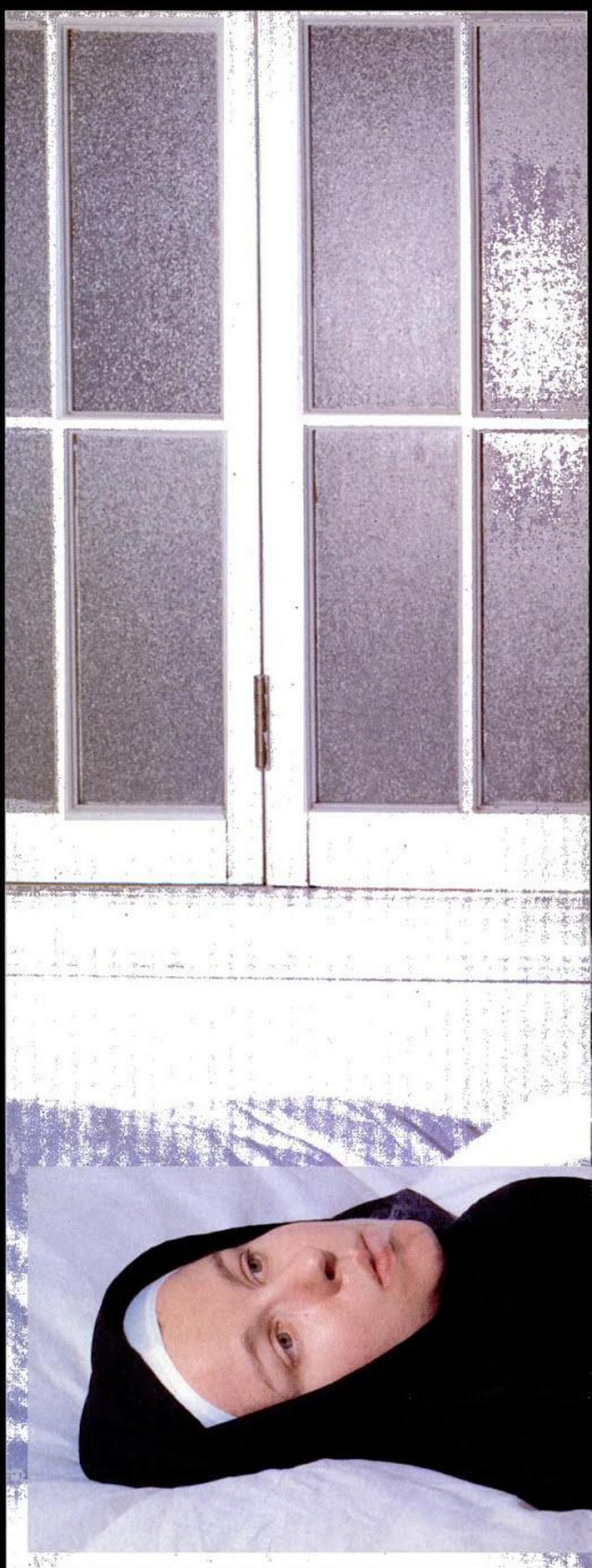
Well, I *was*. A rented nun's habit made of a

graduation gown, some floppy pieces of black fabric and a wimple with not quite enough Velcro to keep the black veil from slipping off my head. Maybe it wasn't completely authentic—especially the Velcro—but you can't just walk up to a nun and ask to trade clothes with her.

As an adolescent, I read up on convents. I draped towels over my head to see what I'd look like. And I wasn't even Catholic. In a convent, I was convinced, I'd shake loose the shackles of everyday life. In a convent, I would never have to go to dancing school or unload the dishwasher.

PHOTOGRAPH BY INEZ VAN LAMSWEERDE

by Ann Hodgman





"I'M PROBABLY NOT SPEAKING FOR



I would need a vocation, though—a God-given summons to a life of poverty, chastity, obedience and big black shoes. As it turned out, my vocation stood me up. But I still wanted to try on those shoes. That is why, a few weeks ago, I found myself renting a habit and sauntering—well, stumbling—through the city streets for two days to see what life would have been like if I'd become Sister Scholastica.

The first thing I noticed was that everyone who paid attention to me immediately checked out my feet. Had they *all* seen *The Lady Vanishes*?

"Fuck!—oh, sorry, Sister," said a teenage girl walking by. "Look, Daddy! It's just like Whoopi Goldberg!" a little boy shouted. A man asked me if I was warm enough. "Oh, yes. I have things on underneath," I said foolishly. We fell into step together, I suspect to the dismay of both of us. Finally he said, "Well, I'll let you go." He kept on walking next to me, but I knew what he meant.

Divining a patsy, a man soliciting donations zeroed in on me before I could get away. "I can't make a contribution unless I check with the Mother Superior," I told him. (The lie came easily. Whenever a salesman calls me at home, I always say the same thing, substituting "husband" for "Mother Superior.")

"But it's for human *rights*!" the man said angrily. "Everyone will be *happy*!" I repeated my excuse and hurriedly ducked down into the subway.

There I shoved my way to the front of a long line of people waiting for tokens. "I'm in kind of a hurry," I explained. As penance, I was forced to listen to a fellow passenger's long description of his "spiritual" novel.

I wasn't in any kind of a hurry, of course. I was just going to Bergdorf's. In the past I've found Bergdorf's salespeople oppressively conscientious about helping customers. They seem to be somewhat less so when the customers are nuns. I walked past racks of expensive lingerie, tut-tutting at the prices and running my nun-nish hands over all the gauze and lace, and salespeople fell back as though I were a leper. On the main floor, I actually had to walk up and *beg* a perfume demonstrator to spray me. "You have good taste," she said with a tense laugh. The perfume was called *Femme*.

In the Bergdorf's bathroom, on the other hand, a woman came right up to me as I was trying to adjust my wimple. (Is it okay for nuns to look at their reflections in the mirror?) She put her clammy hand on mine as if I were some kind of good-luck charm. "Oh, Sister, please pray for me," she begged. "My home was washed away in a storm." I promised, wondering why it made me feel guilty to be treated like a genie.

It was lunchtime, and I caught a cab uptown. When I closed the door, my cabdriver turned all the way around to look at me. "May I ask you a question?" he asked. "The people in charge, like yourself—why do they dress that way?"

"We—uh—we want to set ourselves apart from the world, I guess," I fumbled.

The driver pounced on this. "But you are *in* the world! You can't pretend to be separate from it!"

"The world of fashion, I mean," I amended. "We're trying to show that we don't pay attention to fashion."

"What do you mean by fashion?" he asked crossly.

MOST NUNS, BUT I'M PROCHOICE™



"People who go to parties?"

"No. Just, you know, *fashion*." Maybe I was being given a valuable opportunity to educate someone. "Nuns have been dressing this way for hundreds of years," I went on. "It's more economical, and it takes our minds off—"

"So why do you tell someone to have a baby who cannot afford it?" he cut in.

Eeeeeek! I could feel the Velcro on my wimple starting to unhook. "I'm probably not speaking for most nuns here, but I'm prochoice," I blurted out. I couldn't help it.

My inquisitor glared at me. "Well, then, what would have happened if Mary had had an abortion? The world wouldn't be very good without Jesus, would it?"

You're asking a nun? I took a deep breath. "Um, I'm sure you're not saying that I believe people should be forced to have abortions," I suggested.

"Tell me something else," the driver ordered sternly. "How could you abandon your parents like that?"

After a brief scolding on this subject, he returned to questions of costume. "I think you should dress like a regular person. In a simple navy dress," he told me.

Thank God we'd just arrived at Mortimer's. I gave the driver the saintliest smile I could manage. "I guess that means you don't want *me* to have a choice," I cooed, and I scrambled out before he could say anything else.

Mortimer's seats nuns without any trouble. In addition, it offers many celebrity socialites per square foot. Of course, since I was a nun, I didn't know who any of these celebrity socialites were, so it was okay for me to pin Blaine Trump and Mica Ertegun with an unblink-

(From left) At Condomania, New York's safe-sex boutique; at the Pink Pussycat Boutique; en route to Mortimer's restaurant

ing stare for the entire meal. And it took the *entire* meal to decide what Ivana Trump's new hairdo looked like: rope sprayed out of a can.

At the end of the meal one of the waiters came up and asked, "Is this your taxi receipt?" It was. Across the top, in big black letters, I had written NUN. "You were right. It was a taxi," he called to another waiter.

““

D

O YOU HAVE ANY RELIGIOUS STUFF?" I ASKED a woman at the information booth of the Metropolitan Museum. "Well, there's a chapel," she said doubtfully. "Do you give a religious discount?" I asked at the ticket booth. The cashier was unfazed. "It's a dona-

tion," she said. "You can give whatever you want." Abashed, I paid the full recommended amount. Then I took that little metal "I've paid" button and hid it in my purse. In every room I visited, the museum guards—who, on normal days, swoop down like eagles even when I've fastened the button to the end of my nose—now stepped back to let me by.

At the Metropolitan, I learned that standing in front of religious stuff dressed in a nun's habit and letting out a gusty, adoring sigh is a good way to get an unobstructed view of the entire room. I also met a guard who not only gave me directions to the bathroom but kindly asked,

WE ALSO SAW THE MAÎTRE D'S



"Did everything work out okay?" when he saw me later.

The Body Shop is the kind of place a nun would buy her makeup, isn't it? At the shop on Madison Avenue I practically wrestled a saleswoman to the floor and told her I was looking for something not too conspicuous. "I only wear these colors," I added. As she brought tube after tube of putty-colored stuff—smirking whenever she turned away—I found myself getting more and more irritated: "Why do you keep showing me these nothing colors? It's not because I'm a *nun*, is it?" She hesitated, and I rushed out of the store.

From the Body Shop I proceeded to St. Patrick's. It was worse than dancing school. I had no idea what to do in there. I dropped my purse, tried to get into the wrong side of the pew and forgot to cross myself with holy water. As I was making my bumbling way out a man asked, "Sister, are they saying mass?"

I glanced feverishly behind me. It didn't look like mass. As far as I could tell, everyone was just walking around.



"Uh, not right now," I quavered.

"I meant in the back," he persisted.

The back? St. Patrick's has a back? "I don't know," I said. "I'm not from around here."

The Playland near Times Square is a different kind of church, I guess. When I got there, a man followed me from game to game, humping me from behind. He made me a little nervous, I have to say, and when I got outside, I walked around the block approximately 9,000 times before I could bring myself to walk into a dirty-video store.

First I read over the customers' shoulders. All of them were comparison-shopping so intently that they never looked up, even when I breathed right into their faces.

"What's *this* about?" I asked one man, pointing to the tape in his hand.

"Not for ladies," he answered brusquely.

Hey—there's a lady on the cover! But I didn't say it aloud. I was afraid the cashier would throw me out for causing trouble—you know, like those nuns in El Salvador. In-

FACE FALL WHEN HE SAW US



(From left) Pausing at Abraham & Straus cafeteria; strolling in Greenwich Village; at Playland, the Manhattan games arcade

NUNS ARE PROBABLY EVEN RARER IN PSYCHIATRISTS' offices than in pornography shops. My friend Jim and I had arranged to meet at his group-therapy session before we went out to dinner. How quiet the members of the group became when they walked into the foyer and I flung myself—by prearrangement—into Jim's arms! In total silence, they walked out of the building ahead of us. "I hope you're not trying to convert him," one member of the group muttered.

Jim and I had decided to eat at Cafe Tabac—an extremely fashionable East Village restaurant that does not take reservations—even though we were afraid we might see Mickey Rourke there. We called just before we arrived to make sure there was space for us. Yes, we were told, there was a nice table for two. The table was right by the window; we saw it as we came in. We also saw the maître d's face fall when he saw us.

Hiding his face behind the clipboard and peeking out at us, he conferred with one of the waiters for a long, long time. He then walked up to us and announced that there would be a 45-minute wait.

"But we just called you!" I protested.

He shrugged. "I'm really sorry. Someone else asked for that table just before you. They're on their way over now."

We finally had dinner at Knickerbocker's, where everyone was much nicer and the waiter got me my Jack Daniels with a beer chaser right away. ("Right away, Sistab!" he said.) A few days later, I was embarrassed to see a nun on a Fox commercial order exactly the same thing.

stead I settled in for a little browsing myself, finally choosing a comparatively demure-looking tape called *Maiden Heaven* because it had the word *heaven* in it. The cashier's face was utterly bland as I paid. I might have been buying a handkerchief.

Back on the street, though, I heard an incredulous voice: "Are you a real nun?" I turned to see three incense sellers staring at me from their sidewalk booth.

"Yes, I am," I said.

"I would've lost a bet!" one of them explained. "I didn't think you would talk to us." The man yanked off his fez and held it to his heart. "I take my hat off to you, miss. You've changed my whole idea of religion. Here, I'd like you to have this. It's all natural."

He handed me a vial of rose oil. "This is really nice of you," I said. "I don't know if I'll be allowed to wear it, but—"

You can put it on a light bulb or something," he told me. "Someone as uninhibited as you should not have trouble being creative."

ON BALANCE, I FELT, THE CITY HAD TREATED ME shockingly well. I'd gotten some free rose oil; I'd been harassed only a couple of times; and people had asked me to pray for them. Somehow I felt that if I'd suffered more during the course of the day, I wouldn't be bound so surely on the road to hell.

So I was almost happy when, after dinner, a battered old car pulled up next to me and a guy in his twenties stuck his head out. "Can you fly?" he asked me. (I heard squeals of girlish laughter from inside the car.)

"Yes," I said, for no reason in particular.

"Jump off that building, then," he said, and he peeled away. I headed for home, my faith in New York restored. ☾

Don't Ever Change

**Winger Replaces Bogey & Bacall;
James Atlas Replaces P. J. O'Rourke;
The New Yorker Replaces Hustler**
by T. W. Irwin

A friend of mine says that she has only one rule about dating: She will not go out with any man who admires the work of Pat Conroy or Tom Robbins. My friend recently wondered if she could take Robbins off the list, thus widening her range. After reading an article by Robbins in *Esquire*, an interview with Debra Winger, I have had to advise my friend that he must remain on the list.

Although it has always been easy to avoid reading Tom Robbins, it has not always been so simple to avoid hearing your hairdresser or a receptionist talk excitedly about his books. And the new administration in Washington may result in a second wave of interest in Robbins.

Robbins begins the interview with obsequy. Because he must know (Robbins is nothing if not knowing) that fawning is essential to the movie-star interview, he turns adulation into his version of high art. It is not just feverish—it is ass-kissing as kitsch: "People seldom forget her voice—which sounds as if it's been strained through Bacall and Bogey's honeymoon sheets and then hosed down with plum brandy. Or her laugh—which sounds as if it's been squeezed out of a kangaroo bladder by a musical aborigine." This is material for a high school creative-writing class. "Winger's Huck Finn swagger, chain-saw intensity, and Algonquin wit...the figure sixty-nines she's allegedly skated upon pond after pond of life's thin ice." What is so remarkable about Robbins's writing is that he manages both to be pretentious and

to sound like the greeting on a Hallmark card. This, happily, is not an easy thing to do.

Robbins can't resist showing off: "The first time I met Debra Winger we caused a Santa Monica bartender to develop repetitive-motion disorder from the incessant refilling of our tequila glasses....We borrowed a razor blade...slit our thumbs and exchanged blood by the light of the jukebox, swaying to the blues and puffing cigars." Sorry—I don't believe a word of it. Like the novelist and fellow *Esquire* contributor Jim Harrison, Robbins crams his sentences with words and phrases from the collective unconscious (not unconscious enough) of middle-aged post-Vietnam *sensitivos*: *Santa Monica, tequila, blood, jukebox, blues*. Robbins writes for that reader who thinks of himself as someone who reads good books—not Michael Korda or Judith Krantz, but serious writers like Jimmy Buffett and Josephine Hart.

Alexandra Penney, the author of



Illustration by Michael Witte

How to Keep Your Man Monogamous who now edits *Self*, wrote a recent Letter from the Editor on the 1990s vs. the 1980s, saying, "My personal take has to do with the quality of my entire life." Her list of 14 pairs, separated into opposing columns, was obvious—inexpensive or decorous or earnest '90s stuff versus expensive and flashy '80s stuff, with James Atlas replacing P. J. O'Rourke, tofu replacing veal, the Frick replacing MoMA—except for one odd, absolutely inaccurate pick: *The New Yorker* replacing *The New Republic*. (Of course, *Self*, like *The New Yorker*, is a Condé Nast magazine.)

Indeed, there is now definitive editorial evidence in the new *New Yorker* that a policy of 1980s-style hipness has been put into place. This sentence is from Marie Brenner's article on Robert Strauss: "Word quickly went around Washington that [former ambassador] Matlock had dissed the new ambassador." From John Lahr's review of the work of the Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov: "The Bolsheviks showed the bourgeoisie their ass." From Stephen Schiff's profile of the Irish writer William Trevor: "Besides, Trevor isn't sexy. He isn't 'hot.'"

The directory in the front of *The New Yorker* always seemed, with its brief recommendations, to have a whimsical fair-mindedness. In the new *New Yorker*, however, an unseemly note of condescension has replaced the whimsy. In the Art section, the work of Kenyan painter Richard Onyango is described as "infectiously charming paintings on canvas in a velvet-painting style....The autobiographical text in the accompanying catalogue is as delightful as the paintings and shares their sense of accidental brilliance." This is astoundingly condescending, maybe worse. What exactly is "accidental brilliance"? In a description of the work of patients in a psychiatric hospital in Florence, "La Tinaia," *The New Yorker* seems to have just discovered that,

"perhaps not surprisingly, institutionalized Italians do it just like the insane everywhere else: there's a full range of styles here...to the single-mindedness of one [patient] who draws the same object over and over until the paper is full."

Work made by prison inmates in the gallery show "Hands of Time" is described as "fascinating, if amateurish. The subject matter is rather limited: tattoos, skulls, devils, barred windows, executions.... There are also some objects made out of the few raw materials at hand: toilet paper, soap, and small rocks... and photo albums made from old cigarette packs—these guys can do a lot with a Camel wrapper." What a pity that these men have not been to Arles, and that the right acrylics are not

stocked in the prison handicraft shop. Should the notice happen to be read by some amateur in Joliet with a gift subscription to *The New Yorker*, the reviewer has good cause to fear for his life (it would make a good television movie—ex-con kills high-minded Manhattan hipster because of offhand review).

If *The New Yorker* is sounding aggressively callow, *Vogue* has taken the fashionableness of decadence to more hysterical heights than ever. Perhaps it is an attempt to imitate some of Diana Vreeland's more famous dictums, such as her suggestion to wash the hair of your blond child in last night's flat champagne. Or perhaps it is just silly. In an article about the London house of designer Liza Bruce and her husband, Nicholas Alvis Vega, a house so neglected-looking that the bank that holds the mortgage worried that the house had been abandoned, we learn that a great amount of effort and money have been spent in order

to make the house look neglected: "Parmesan curls of ancient clotted paint hang from...pilasters. The windows are...wiped with lavender emulsion.... Walls have been bared to expose...the lathing beneath the plaster. Carpets were ripped up, and strips of lead laid as a stair runner." Such deliberation extends

even to a fairly successful cookbook written by Ms. Bruce, about which she brags, "I hadn't realized how much you had to check things for a cookbook—it was full of glaring mistakes. You know, there would be a recipe for bread, and I'd forget to mention the flour...." Maybe there *won't* always be an England.

What can Ann Powers possibly be trying to say in her bewildering review in

The New York Times of a rock band called Extreme? "Satisfied vanity revealed becomes fatuity. This is the rather impertinent name which the hypocrites of modesty—that is to say everybody—have invented, because they are afraid of genuine feelings." So wrote Jules Barbey D'Aurevilly in *Dandyism*, published in 1897....His words apply, almost a century later, to the much maligned world of pop metal." Perhaps it is just a bad translation? One could not find a more disparate coupling than *dandyism* and *pop metal*. Ms. Penney might like to add them to her list.

Michael Kaufman, reviewing the Off SoHo Suites Hotel in the *Times*, must have felt obliged, it being the *Times*, to come clean and mention the presence of homeless people on the streets around the hotel: "Their numbers are too great for them to suggest the legendary charm of Parisian clochards." *Quel dommage.* ☾

UNFORTUNATE RACIST REMARK OF THE MONTH

**"I used to have
a wonderful friend in
Shiva Naipaul,
the West Indian writer
and brother to V.S.;
his untimely death
at 40 left me
with no black friends
in London."**

—Taki,
The New York Observer

Middle-Dee-Dee

**Ain't Nobody in Here but
Us Marginals, Mr. President**
by Roy Blount Jr.

I've figured out the political relevance of a sports-page clipping I've been saving since 1990, when Charlotte Hornets forward Johnny Newman played for the first time against his former mates, the Knicks, and came up flat. "I tried not to be too emotional and not too lax about playing against my friends," Newman explained, "but I fell somewhere in the middle." You'd think falling in the middle between too emotional and too lax would be just right.

But then, you'd think falling in the middle between too rich and too poor would be just right.

Ha!

One problem with America today is that nobody can afford to be bohemian, because the cost of garret dwelling or vagabondage, not to mention café habituation, is prohibitive. But what is even more unsettling is, nobody can afford to be comfortably *middle-class*. Why be bourgeois if you can't be complacent?

Bill Clinton, whose midriff is one of his defining characteristics, got the Democratic nomination by talking about a middle-class tax cut. Once nominated, he claimed to be the only truly middle-class candidate. He accused the Republicans of presiding over "the destruction of the middle class." He spoke often in terms of striking a happy medium. "We share a common philosophy," he said of himself and Al Gore, "that it's time to move beyond the idea of something for nothing on one hand and everybody for himself on the other." The Democrats took the White House by reclaiming the political middle. And yet, it appears that the middle class will be

paying not lower but higher taxes.

In the publishing industry, "mid-list" authors are an endangered class. In corporations, tens of thousands of middle-management people have been thrown out of their jobs. In baseball, as Yankee first baseman Don Mattingly has pointed out, "they're paying the stars, keeping some young guys around and making it tough on the guys in the middle." Maybe us middling people need to establish ourselves as an interest group.

How? We can't afford lobbyists, and we don't have it in us to set fire to our neighborhoods.

The answer may lie in a more recent news story set in Manhattan—a place where it is particularly hard to sustain a middle-class existence, all the more because nobody wants to admit such an existence is desirable.

This story concerned a plan to move 50 homeless families into an

Upper West Side residential hotel described as shabby-genteel (another moribund category). The Upper West Side is perhaps the most predominantly old-liberal district in America, but many of the progressive, not-rich and not-poor tenants of this hotel were resistant to the influx of the needy. One such tenant offered this justification: "Isn't New York City one vulnerable community pitted against another?...Maybe everybody in New York is a little marginal."

Maybe everybody in the middle class is a little marginal. Maybe—as Johnny Newman's experience would suggest—there is no middle. We're living without the Sears catalog and the *Cosby* show (as a matter of fact, the Sears underwear pictures were always pretty kinky, and I just watched *Cosby* tell a lengthy anecdote on the *Charlie Rose* show about the color of his stool), and, let's face it, all our presidents since Eisenhower have been *wacky*. We've had 12 years of bizarre country-club presidencies; let's have one that's frankly far-out in another direction.

I've been watching for stories about Clinton that have the word *middle* in them but aren't platitudinous. Here is one from the *Times*: "I was right in the middle of an anesthetic," recalled Mrs. Kelley, a nurse-anesthetist for 35 years. "My children never, *ever* called me in the operating room. They were just cautioned it was not the place to call me ever, unless it was an emergency. And so Bill called, and he said: 'Please take the phone to Mother. I have something to say to her that I don't want anybody else to tell her.' And he told me Elvis was dead. Oh, what a shock, what a shock."

It is an emergency. Elvis is dead. Interrupt our anesthetic, Mr. Prez, jump on into that gap in our midst and shake it. ☺

**Nobody can afford
to be bohemian
today; the cost of
garret dwelling and
café habituation
is prohibitive**

SPY

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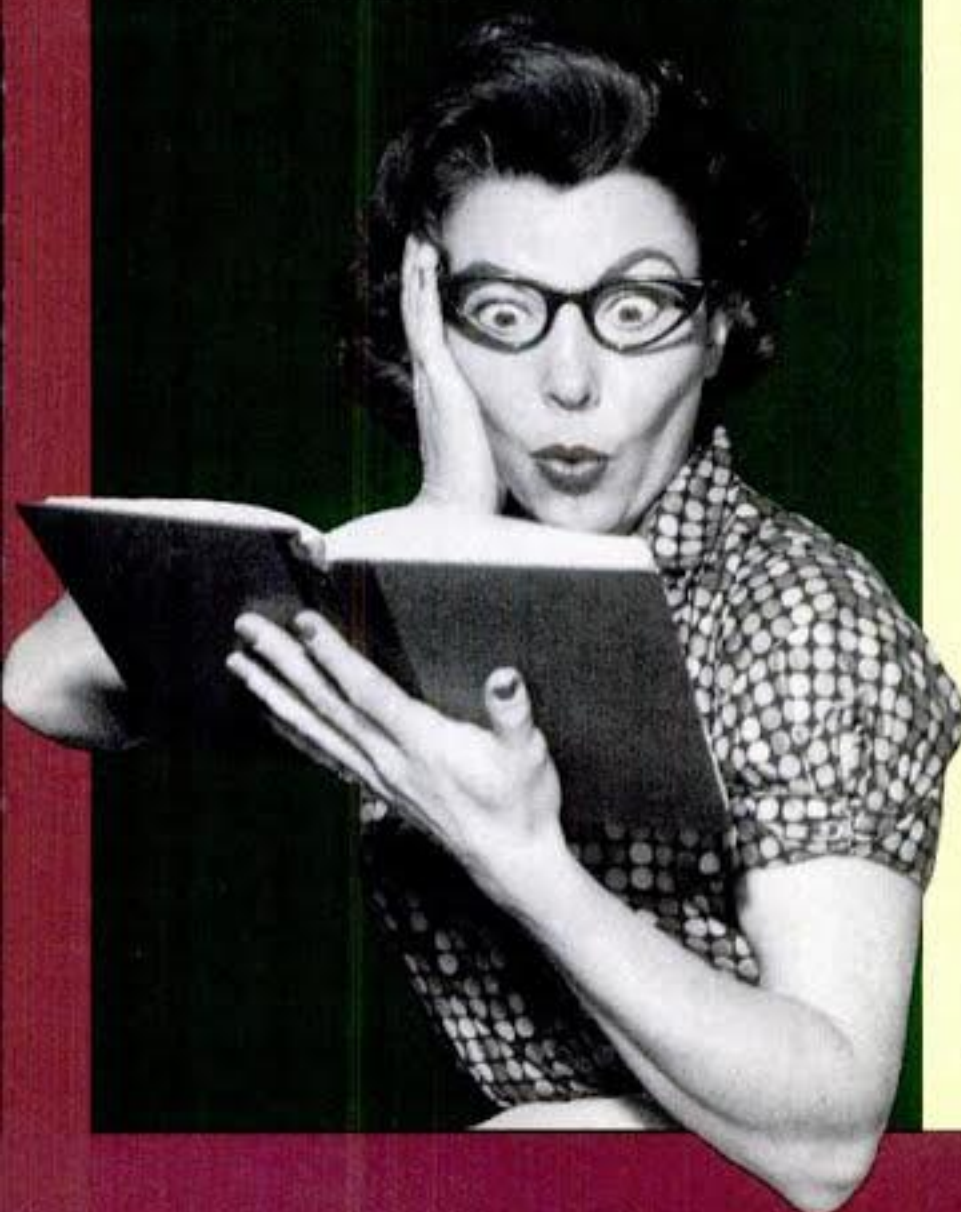
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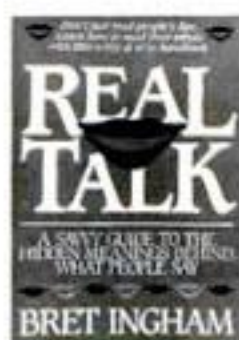
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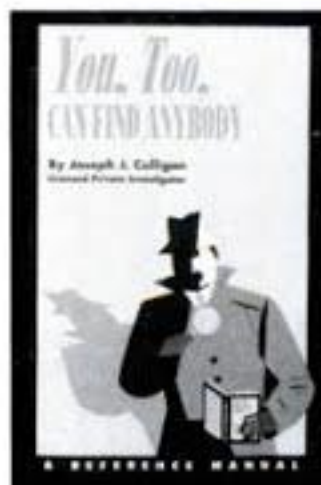


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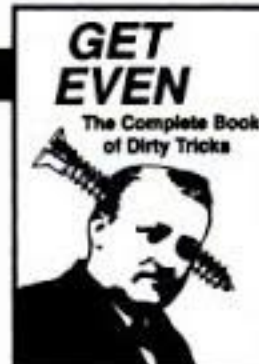


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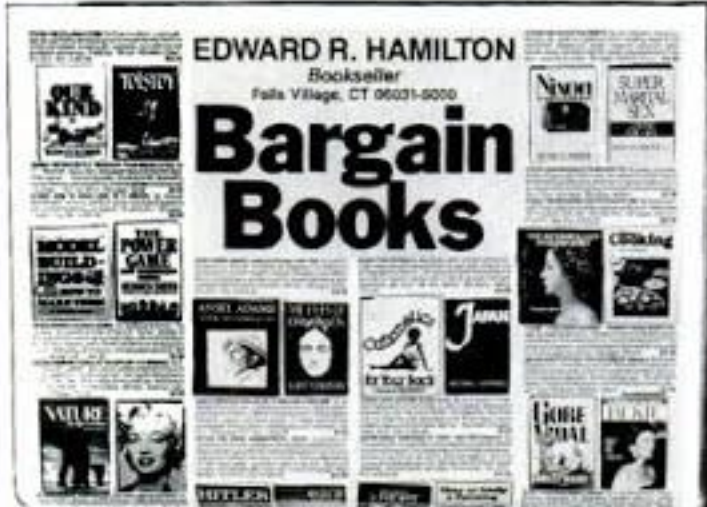
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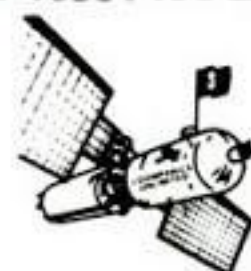
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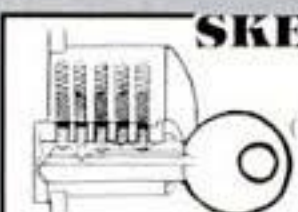
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ROCK 'N' ROLL! Stephanie Seymour—with Axl Rose—voguishly imitates Slash.

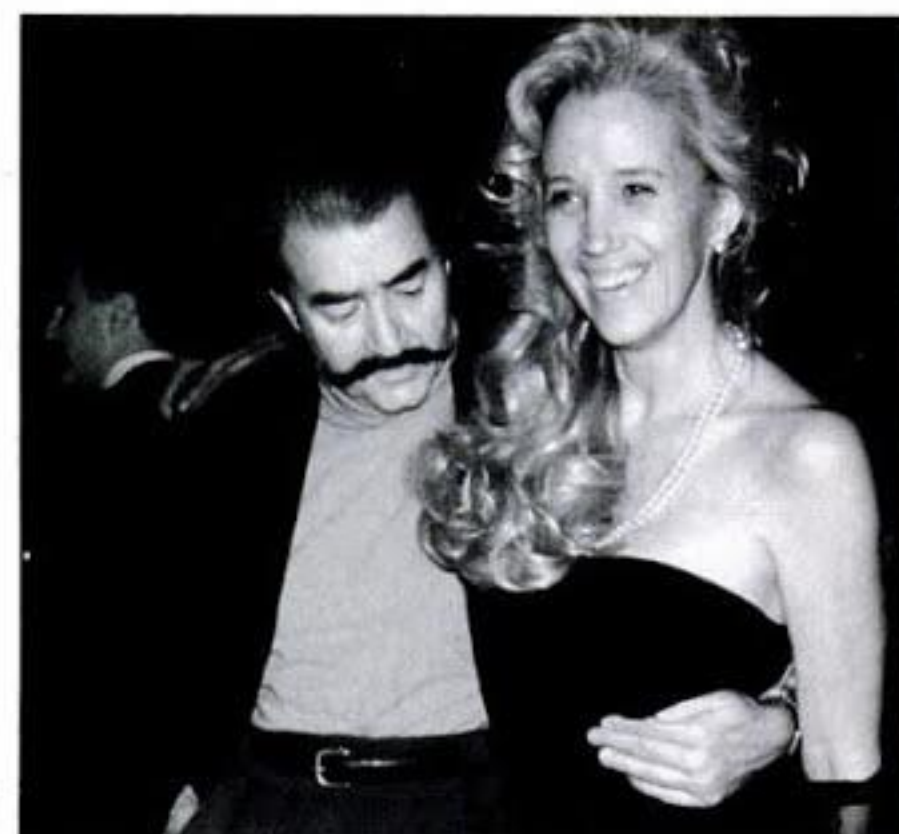


THE SMOOTHY Mort Zuckerman does his check-out-this-great-lady finger-point (borrowed from fellow single-guy developer Donald Trump) with Blair Brown, *left*, way back in 1990, and with friend Moura Wilson at the Inauguration.



NOW, WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE LITTLE GREEN DISK? *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour and her husband take a special subway train to BAM from Manhattan. *Lower left*—S. I. Newhouse.

PARTY
POOP.



NICE HAIR LeRoy Neiman—whose paintings challenge the privileging of “quality”—admires Sally Kirkland’s texture and form.

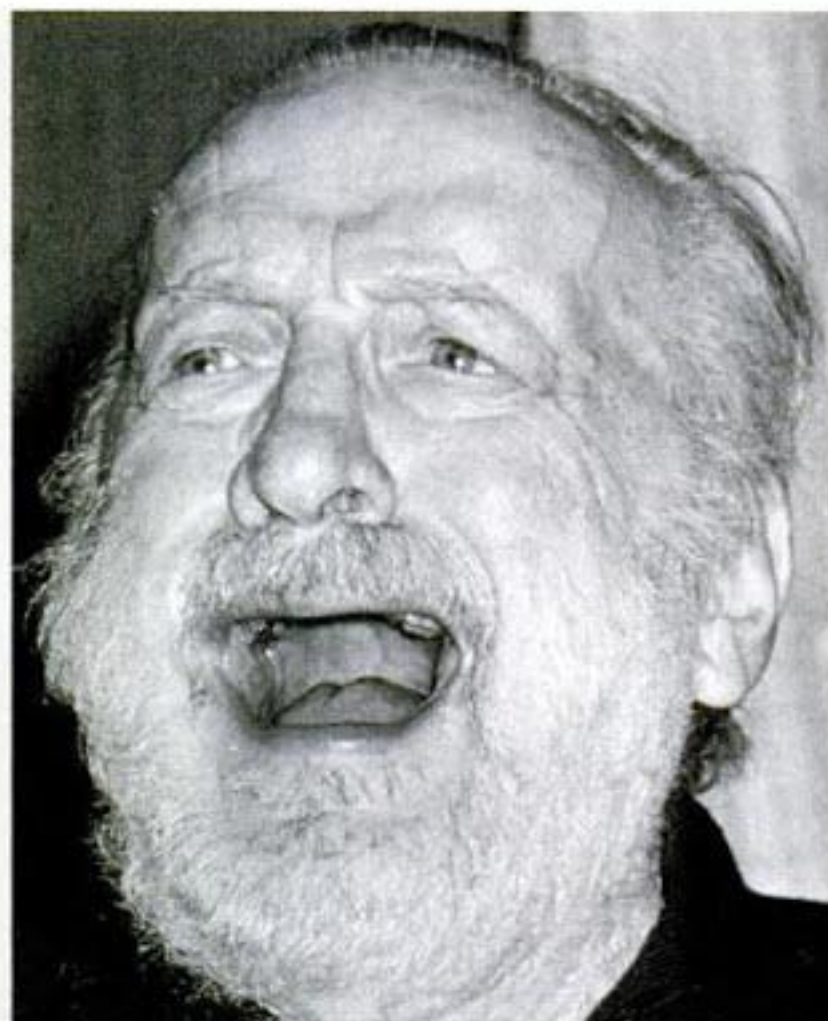


MAN & WIFE It's April, and the De la Rentas, Peabodys and Rosses show that love is everywhere.



SUCH A LADY Marla Maples, *right* (with Susan Anton), sits very properly with her ankles crossed, her knees together and a lovely smile.

PARTY POOP.



CELEBRITY KARAOKE George C. Scott, Jason Robards, Elizabeth Rohatyn, Martin Scorsese, Pat Sajak, Ron Reagan Jr. and James Coburn sing Elvis.

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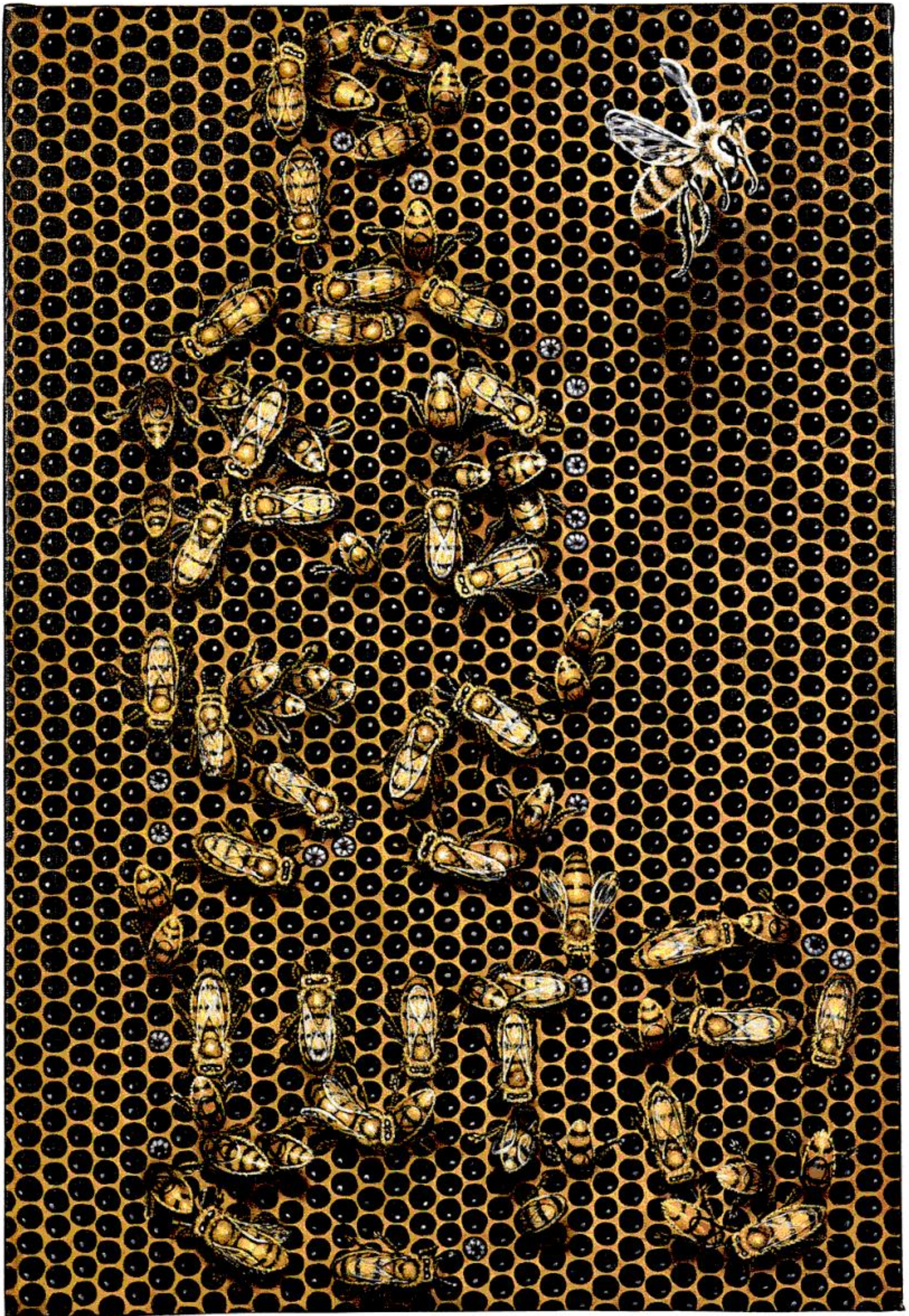
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